Let’s Promise To Laugh About This In The Future

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Let’s Promise To Laugh About This In The Future

by pink_chapstick

Summary

Will Graham has a secret. He has a giant-massive-black hole sized-high school level-crush at 30 years old.

On a serial killer. The most notorious one ever, The Ripper. And the only reason he wants to find the culprit is so he can get rejected and move on (and maybe have an excuse to talk to them).

It’s so embarrassing all he can do is laugh about it.

Hannibal Lecter has a secret. He’s got a crush on a sweaty and smart mouthed detective that is a breath away from catching him. A stare away from truly understanding him like no one else can.

Hannibal just wants to wind him up and watch him go (straight into Hannibal’s awaiting arms).

He is so giddy all he can do is laugh about it.

OR

Hannibal but it’s a campy, gay rom com (and sorry neither of them are twinks)

*****planning on updating this weekly

Notes

First time posting so don’t crucify me too hard \(>~<)/

Also just so you know Will will not have encephalitis in this. He is just that delulu!!

Genesis

As with most days, Will woke up with a headache.

His towel was once again sweaty beneath him. His phone once again ringing with three missed calls from Jack trying to rouse him from the few hours of sleep he had managed to wrestle into. His head once again swimming in hardly forgotten nightmares.

Something had to give.

He just didn't know that the thing to give would be The Ripper. Again.

"Yes Jack, I heard you the first time. Yes I'm on my — Yes yes I know this means a new sounder." Will rolled his eyes. Jack loved to remind him of the Ripper's MO, as if Will wasn't the one that created the killer's profile in the first place. Will slapped some cream cheese on a bagel, grabbed his thermos of black coffee, and hopped in his car. Once the GPS began calling the instructions Will allowed his eyes to unfocus and his mind to drift.

Darkness attempted to grab his wits again, but he shoved it back, entirely too tired to care who was killing who at this point. The fruit tree Alana had given him was dying again, he might as well dwell on that. Will was fine. He was always fine.

Maybe if he kept telling himself that eventually it would come true.

Once arrived he placed his faux glasses on, hoping to block out some of the stares he always seemed to receive. Jack jogged up to him, manifesting an involuntary roll of his shoulders in an attempt to release the mounting tension held within the muscles there.

"It's definitely him again. The Ripper has begun killing again, this one is—"

"Good morning to you too Jack," Will shoved the glasses up his nose only because he knew their presence seemed to get under the guy's skin. In response his boss ground his teeth.

"As I was saying," Jack began again as he shepherded Will toward the corpse. Will tuned him out, instead opting to pull his jacket tighter. Fresh snow blanketed the ground from last night's small storm. Will wished he'd opted for sunglasses as the light painfully reflected from the starkly white ground. Though it paled in comparison to the body that was displayed before him.

Her eyes were closed, frost dripping from her discolored eyelids and lashes. The illusion being a permanent state of tears cascading down her powdery face. Her arms were outstretched in a cross style posture, reminding Will of the Christian Jesus. Bent at the elbow toward the trail that the hiker's had found her on.

An inviting gesture. Inviting someone to come closer in an illusion of warmth. The Ripper did love their irony.

Will suppressed his chuckle at the outline in the snow still left from where one of the hikers had passed out from the shock of their gruesome discovery. Rude, Will thought.

From her arms and fingers hung shards of glass and mirrors, delicately swaying in the breeze that was nipping Will's ears. The glass tinkled and cast rays of the burning sun erratically around the snow.

The most noticeable mirror being the one that was snuggly placed inside her entire torso cavity. He leaned toward it, resisting the urge to run his fingers across the ribs that kept the mirror in perfect place. She must have been quite a healthy young lady for the killer to take so many of her organs.

"What is the bastard trying to say now Graham ?" Jack half yelled in his ear. Will flinched at the sudden voice and quickly put his glasses back on, not sure when he'd even taken them off.

"You've been here longer than I have Jack,"

Jack raised an eyebrow, "I haven't been staring at it for 45 minutes though, now have I?"

Will swallowed. He hadn't realized he had been under the influence (as Will had begun to call it) that long, but now he noticed the tips of his ears and nose burning from the cold.

"They're inviting us to look closer," Will shoved his glasses up again, more to fidget then to annoy, "look closer at ourselves,"

"Why would they want that?"

"Why does the Ripper do anything? To make fun of us and sate their inherent need to perform," Will began in a more hushed tone, "they won't get caught until they want to get caught Jack. We're out of our league here,"

Jack's jaw ticked as he bellowed orders at some trainees, which he was always prone to do once aggrieved. The Ripper always aggrieved him.

"You seem proud of this monster and his inability to be outsmarted," Jack hissed. Will felt the breath escape from his puffed up chest. He'd forgotten to conceal his excitement. Whoops

"Not proud or happy Jack, just fascinated. Believe me I'd much rather they be in a box to be studied then out in the wild hunting like a vicious creature," Will lied. Part of the enjoyment of the Ripper was they were uncatchable. They handed out death as if they were Death themselves. Sometimes Will wondered…

Will licked his dry lips at the same moment a camera flashed to his right. He groaned as a shock of red curls made their bouncy getaway from the crime scene tape.

For the love of God he just prayed she didn't make another Murder Husbands article, less the Ripper decide to file a divorce in the near future.

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Hannibal ushered Franklyn out from his office, promising another session next week, withholding the fact that the subject would be the patient's referral. Franklyn was far too rude and not even close to interesting enough to make up for it for Hannibal to keep entertaining him. Recently, Franklyn had even tried his hand at stalking his psychiatrist. A rather pathetic attempt.

As the door clicked shut Hannibal dropped his smile. His face cracked and slipped, revealing his true feelings that usually stayed plastered behind a mask. Before his next patient he had approximately 30 minutes to relax and then rezip his person suit back up.

His laptop whirred to life. The newest tableau was slowly becoming one of his favorites, and he was itching to see if a certain someone had reacted to it yet.

Tattle Crime's website assaulted his eyes with vibrant colors and horrifying, ugly fonts. He pursed his lips but read on in search of a specific coverage. A sharp intake of breath.

"You seem to be liking them more and more," Hannibal smiled wolfishly at the picture of Will Graham observing his latest piece. One picture the man was even licking his lips while observing the woman's bleached ribs.

At first he hadn't given the agent much more thought than anyone else investigating his extracurricular activities. Graham's statements to the public were bland and generic, the way he delivered his lines even more boring. Then Freddie had released a recording of William speaking with Jack on her little website. Hannibal still wasn't sure how she'd gotten it, but he was grateful to her all the same.

"Jack this can hardly be considered murder anymore , I mean it's art. The curve of the spines, placing of the severed limbs and organs, their expressions, the elements they're placed in. I mean they carved a bone into an elk. An elk Jack. That is some freaky ass shit and it's enough to make any profiler bust a damn nu—"

Twenty uninterrupted minutes of dear Will going on about his work. Hannibal's lips curved at the memory. He really wanted to arrange a meeting with such an avid fan.

At that moment his phone buzzed. Usually the contact name would elicit an eye roll and sigh, but this time Hannibal had to school the glee from his tone by clearing his throat.

"Dr. Lecter speaking,"

"Lecter, it's Jack. I know you've mentioned your patient load is too big to help with any cases right now, but we could really use some—" Jack took a moment to take a large breath, like he was having trouble saying the word, "help with the Ripper case,"

Fortunately, Hannibal was feeling extra helpful as of late

So Now You Wanna Talk About Being Normal

Chapter Summary

Will and Hannibal meet. Nothing could go wrong

Chapter Notes

This is a pro-autism Will Graham space so be prepared. I did extensive research into autism to make him as accurate as possible (just kidding I have autism cause I'm Will Graham and we're the same person).

Not beta read so enter at your own peril. Please don't hurt me over any run on sentences I'm literally just a 23 year old teenager

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal exited his black Bentley and tightened his jacket against the cool air. This wasn't the first time he'd entered the FBI training building, but it was the first time in a long time he was excited to be in the building. After a polite knock and piercing "enter" from Jack's office, Hannibal entered with a schooled expression of dampened curiosity.

His nostrils flared at the cocktails of smells that assaulted him upon opening the door. He could excuse a lot. The anxiety, the dog smell, the sweat (which actually kinda smelled nice), but one thing he could never excuse.

That goddamn aftershave. The stupid little ship on a stupid little bottle in the back of a stupid little Walmart aisle practically slapped him in the face upon entering. Once he got his hands on that bottle he'd shatter it.

And there was the sweet scent of a fever cooking someone's brain. Interesting.

"Lecter," Jack stood and shook Hannibal's hand, "thank you for helping with this considering your schedule,"

"I am always seeking to further my interpersonal relationships and assist with public safety. Thank you for considering me in such a high profile case,"

Jack looked expectantly at Will for a fellow introduction. Will chewed his bottom lip.

"Graham, don't really do handshakes, not to be rude. Sensitive skin," he forced out, clutching the fabric of his pant legs in sweaty palms.

“You don’t engage in eye contact either I’m assuming,” Hannibal poked.

“If you were smart enough to notice it I woulda assumed you were smart enough not to mention it either,” Will quipped, earning a hard gaze from Jack.

Will shrugged, “he started it.”

“I’ll admit my involvement in attempting a rise out of him,”

“Yeah well I’m finishing it,” Jack threw a fat file on top of the desk, “I can already tell working with you two…” he rubbed his temples.

Will watched Hannibal flip through the folder out of the corner of his eye. Out of all the ugly psychiatrists in this world his socially inept ass was stuck with the hot one? Why couldn’t he be old or fat or balding or look like Chilton. Will had always been weak to jawlines. And cheekbones. Damn it.

Hannibal passed the folder to Will, taking the moment to allow their fingers to graze. Neither of them missed the heat creeping up the back of Will’s neck.

This might just be Hannibal’s favorite toy yet.

“I already know them all,” Will choked out, allowing the folder to land back on Jack’s overflowing desk. The tower of paperwork proceeded to topple off the desk and splatter the floor like blood on a gunshot wound. No one moved to pick up the papers. Will contemplated jumping out the office window onto the street below. Hannibal already wanted to take Will to an opera to see what chaos his presence would create. Jack thought about telling both the annoying bastards to get out of his office.

“Back to the subject at hand.” Jack opted to ignore the files for now.

“Do we have a working profile on the Ripper? I think it would help for me to hear your thoughts on the matter. Since you have both been working on the case closely this last year,” Hannibal slipped his right ankle to rest on his left knee. Effortlessly his voice matched his psychiatrist suit in a display of mild expectation. Will rolled his eyes. Oh great. One of those psychiatrists. A head so far up their own ass they might as well talk from that hole too.

“Highly intelligent and artistic individual, they see the world through an entirely different lens than most. Their control is superb for them to have not gotten caught after killing this long with so many victims. Cannibalistic tendencies, which would usually points to some sadistic sexual incompetence, but I don’t think that’s the case here. I think they just see people the same as livestock. If you’re better than animals and their baser instincts then you live, if not you’re eaten with them. Which is ironic considering they have instincts to kill people but I—“

Jack held up a hand.

“Pretty much they’re on the level of a fallen Angel,” Will finished, despite Jack’s hand still waving in front of his face. Hannibal had nodded his head continuously through Will

speaking about The Ripper with twinkling eyes and sporadic movements of excitement. Though his expression was one of neutral listening, he felt his back molars might crack in half if he continued to hold back a wanton smile.

“Actually, while we do need continuous help in catching the damn killer, Dr. Lecter is more… here for your assistance Graham,” Jack leaned back in his chair, awaiting the verbal assault.

Will blinked. Then blinked again.

“Excuse me?” Will gripped the sides of his chair. He felt the heat of embarrassment press into his ears and turn them red.

“Listen, ever since that recording got leaked the board has been down my throat about your involvement in this case. They’re worried you’re in too deep. Worried your biased. I can’t even come up with an argument to dispute the issue with them. So would you rather be off the case or on the case and have a paid therapy appointment once a week?”

“I’d rather not have a damn babysitter,”

“Once you’re signed off as normal then you can ditch the appointments and just do what you always do! Save lives!” Jack slammed his fist on the desk. More papers cascaded to the floor from the sudden fluctuation.

Hannibal raised his eyebrows. Like he was going to let Will or Jack off that easily. This was the most excitement he’d seen since Franklyn’s grandmother had died two months ago.

“Normal?” Will spat. Jack cursed. Leave it to him and his damn mouth to step on Graham’s biggest landmine. Hannibal interlocked his fingers and placed them delicately on his abdomen. Ready for the show.

“If I was normal you’d still be working with that shitty profile from Chilton. Which might I add for Dr. Lecter’s knowledge had The Ripper in the same category as the Minnesota Shrike. I mean bless his heart but give me a break. Normal me would have gotten a better desk job than listening to this bullshit all day and being pushed into insomnia and overwork by you. Normal Will Graham wouldn’t be too socially inept and hate change too much to quit this damn Ripper case and job!” Will continued as Jack rubbed his eyes in exhaustion. He could tell Graham was heading toward absolute-meltdown-category-level-nuclear. God, someone please call Beverly.

“…FUCK YOU JACK! And Dr. Lecter I’m assuming you're competent enough to find your way back to your car. I’m taking my lunch and so is Beverly,” Will turned and slammed the door on his way out. Hannibal’s jaw ticked in amusement, but he covered it by running his flat palms against his midsection.

“As you can see,” Jack started, “I’m a bit over my head here. Bella and I never had children so I got to skip this whole teenage level rage stage in life. Yet he’s the closest we’re ever going to come to understanding or catching The Ripper. I don’t feel I can help him without the bias of the public’s saftey hampering my decisions,”

“Don’t worry Jack. I feel I’m well equipped to be Will’s shadow long enough for The Ripper’s true identity to come to light,” Hannibal stood and put his coat back on.

“Thank you Doctor,” Jack also stood to begin picking his papers up from the floor.

“I’ll be letting you know my next availability as soon as I have made it back into my office,”

Jack waved a hand in acknowledgement, already fretting bribing Beverly to bribe Will to bribe Hannibal to let Graham in the field.

A smile ghosted Lecter’s lips as a faint WHERE THE FUCK IS BEVERLY drifted down the hallway.

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“Then he said I could help more if I was normal. What does that even mean? If I was normal… what even is normal. I mean Beverly he—“

“It sounds like,” Beverly said in between bites of her egg salad sandwich “Jack was just explaining you can get a doctor’s note to prove you aren’t helping The Ripper cause you’re in love with them. Not that you weren’t normal enough to be on the case or that you have been doing a bad job recently. Which is how you took it,”

Will let his mouth go agape until Beverly flicked a carrot into it. He paced the floor and didn’t speak until the carrot was chewed and swallowed.

“Well I still don’t wanna do therapy, and I’m not in love with them. It’s a professional curiosity,” he said gazing out the window.

“Then don’t but you know you’ll be taken off The Ripper case,” Beverly shrugged, “and whatever you have to say to help yourself sleep at night but you have heart eyes at every crime scene. That’s why it’s so easy for Lounds to practically make a website dedicated to you,”

“I don’t sleep at night,” Will sulked into his peanut butter and jelly. He chose to ignore the other fair points Beverly had made.

“So the therapist. Heard he was hot,”

“He’s an ass,” Will rolled his eyes.

“Yeah I heard he had a nice one of those too,” Beverly squeezed the air in front of her while wiggling her eyebrows. Will flushed.

“Didn’t get to see it considering I left first,”

“That’s good news. Meant he got to see yours,” Beverly swiped through the air to mimic the movement of slapping someone’s backside. Will snorted juice through his nose.

“I think he was too focused on the middle finger I was holding up,” Will wiped the juice from his mouth. Actually he had noticed that the good doctor was watching him closely. Like a child with a new magnifying glass watches an ant walk down a blistering sidewalk. Or a hawk staring at a field mouse. Will kept this uneasiness to himself however. Beverly was even more paranoid than he was, and he didn’t need her getting him kicked off the case for something as small as a predatory psychiatrist. Narcissistic personalities had always been drawn to his empathy disorder but driven away by his autistic bluntness and perceptive eyes that were always on the look out for manipulation tactics.

Hannibal would be just like the others, driven away by the first sign of accommodating Will’s mental needs. He would sign off after their first meeting instead of dealing with the effort that was Will’s psyche. Hannibal would fold. He would leave. Just like the others.

Everything would work out fine.

Will scarfed down the rest of his sandwich, even though it left a heavy feeling of anticipation in the pit of his stomach.

“Thanks for helping me calm down Bev,”

“Anytime,” she smiled and gave him a thumbs up. One of the best things about her was she always respected his aversion to physical contact. He’d take a bullet for her, but damn if hugging hadn’t always felt a step too far.

“Break time is over,” Jack burst into the room, “everyone in the van. Some fucker is making people into angels,”

Chapter End Notes

Me 🤝 Will Graham
Anger issues, blunt, thinks Hannibal Lecter is hot

The Beginning of the End Times

Chapter Summary

Meeting Elliot/AngelMaker. Will attends therapy. Nothing could go wrong

Chapter Notes

Note : Now is when the canon divergence begins. I'm just gonna write the story how I want to <3 in the order/timeline I want it <3 but a lot of things will be similar.

Also this will be your only warning. As a writer I personally really love writing angst. This is a slow burn so I don't plan for it soon but that doesn't mean it won't be here. It could come at any moment. Hopefully when you least expect it :-) tags have been updated to accommodate.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Elliot Budish scooped ice into a bucket. The motel was shitty but he could bear it for one night. As long as the night didn't take him.

He squeezed hard on the cold metal handle to allow his heart beat to slow. This was the first night he'd seen no one along his route to pray for him. Fast food rolled in his stomach at the thought of no one kneeling at his bedside to ensure safe passage through the night or, god willing, into a softer existence.

Reading The Holy Book had taken his mind from many things this last month, especially the golf ball sized tumor chipping away at his sanity. Logically he knew it was a wandering cell, just trying to do its job in the wrong part of his body, but it felt like a parasite. Some nights he felt it slithering and squirming along the ridges of his brain.

Ghoulish hellfire crept across the ice, crawling across the cracks like spider's thin legs. The heat of such sin cast goosebumps across his flesh. Out of the corner of Elliot's eyes the flames gnawed and spread like a thin web. It engulfed the very air he shuttered out of his lungs, consuming a couple's heads in hellfire. His heart seized.

He could save them. His own mind began to weave its own intricate web. A moment of silent prayer in thanks to the Lord for providing him one more night on this earth. One more night to create something repentant out of the most unrepentant in mankind. There would still be another day for him to transform. To emerge from the chrysalis of death and boiling disease

as an angel of perfect mind and body. He would transcend the darkness of death's door and ascend straight into godliness. He would…

"Are you ok sir? You've been looking at that ice so long it's a bit melted,"

Elliot blinked. To his side now resided a child of about 7 years. She looked into his eyes with much larger ones, crystallized by striking blue irises. He took a step back.

Many times through his travels did he see many heads ablaze with hell's fire as marking, but her eyes quietly burned with it. The points of horns were growing from her forehead, lacing her hairline in shadows like a crown of thorns. For one so young she had a controlled level of masked sin.

"Abigail!" a man snapped. The flame died, turning her predatory lynx stare into doe eyes. The man that called Abigail placed his hand in front of hers and she wrapped her hand around 3 of his fingers. Elliot mentally marked the name. To avoid it.

"I was just being friendly daddy," she smiled, exposing a dimple.

"Sorry about that sir," tipping his hat, the man hauled his daughter away. As he whispered softly to her she waved at Elliot, her grin glistening like a wolf grinning at a rabbit.

Elliot looked down at his melted ice in a bucket. He would deal with the couple first. That father and daughter were already true demons. He could not elevate them back into angels and his time was much too limited to even foster the thought.

He knocked on room 403 with a fresh bucket of hardened ice.

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Will rolled his shoulders in the waiting room. The seat was plush. Fancy enough to make him scoff (and pray he'd stop sweating on it).

They had found two bodies in the hotel, their skin flayed into wings and their heads in prayer. Instead of figuring out why the killer was mutilating corpses, Will was stuck on some shrinks leather couch. He rolled his shoulders.

"Will, come in," Hannibal opened the door. Will breezed past him and took in the office. The room was walled in with books of every subject and varying languages, the chair small but fashionably comfortable. Though the two chairs felt a bit uncomfortably close together for Will's taste. He thought it too rude to move the chair around on his first visit so he remained haunting the room and pretended to browse the books.

Light fingers pawed at his shoulders. Will yelped in surprise as he turned to the source of the sudden skin contact. Hannibal stood behind him with raised eyebrows. The doctor's hands were suspended in midair, as if he had also been taken by surprise. When had he even manifested behind Will? For such an intimidating figure he was light on his feet.

"My apologies, I only wanted to hang your coat. You are sweating profusely. Was I rude in assuming the coat was making you uncomfortable?"

Will glanced at Hannibal's suspended hands and the door then back at the doctor's hands. Swallowing, he ripped his jacket off and dropped it into Lecter's arms. This time he made sure their fingers had no chance to make contact.

Hannibal silently drifted back to the coat rack. His gait was relaxed, hoping to force Will to mimic and be put at ease. He cataloged physical contact under the Don't Even Try It in his mind's Will Graham folder.

"Would you like to have a seat with me Will?" Hannibal elongated his arm with an open palm toward the seat in front of him. Will rolled his shoulders, missing the comfort his heavy coat usually provided. Again he looked at the door. The thought of being off Jack's team made him stomp toward the chair. The thought of only hearing about the Ripper through his peer's whispered breaths and Tattle Crime's discourteous reporting made him plop down into it.

"Tell me about your childhood Will. Let's start there," Hannibal folded his hands across his midsection and leaned back. Actually he wanted to start by popping Will's head open, asking his every opinion on the Ripper. He wanted to force Will to look into Hannibal's eyes and see him and understand him and accept him.

He had to be patient. This game was chess with a wild animal. The game would end for Hannibal if, after feeding, petting, doting on the beast, he could grab the stray by the scruff. Tame it before it even felt the collar clicking on its neck. It would end for Will if he figured out Hannibal's true identity first. Hannibal would be locked away, alone, like a retired circus lion. A mere trophy on Will's mantle.

Hannibal liked his odds. No matter how long it took, he was content to tear down Will's mental forts brick by brick by dog hair covered brick.

"That's some lazy psychiatry Dr. Lecter. You're going for the low hanging fruit right away?" Will worked his bottom lip. He refused to look Hannibal in the eyes.

"It seems that low hanging fruit is on a high branch. Unreachable,"

"Yes, well so are my parents. Hardly knew my mother, I wish I hardly knew my father. I'm not here to be analyzed. Jack is the only one that thinks I need therapy,"

"What you need is an anchor. You need a way out of the dark places Jack sends you,"

"Respectfully, Doctor, you have no fucking idea what I need. You don't know a thing about me. We met two days ago," Will kneaded his thighs. He was failing at acting nonchalant like he planned in the waiting room. Driven into a corner already, he wanted out of this office and out of Hannibal's gaze. No matter how alluring the golden gaze was, it would be foolish to let his guard down. A siren was a siren, no matter the form it took.

"Do you ever have any problems Will?" Hannibal shifted his weight like a bird of prey shifts midair at the sight of a fleeing mouse. Will's eyes widened at the realization. That is what Hannibal's gaze reminded him of. A raven's cold stare as it picked at roadkill.

“Me? No,” Will chuckled with his hand lightly grazing his chest in mock surprise. Never would he admit it to himself, but always enjoyed watching those birds and scavenge. So starved for life they snatched it away from others. Testing his place and how far he could go had warranted many quick strikes from his father’s closed palms. The harsh childhood locked a coyote inside his rib cage, but it gnawed and chewed daily, desperate to feed and fill its belly. Hannibal wasn’t the only one capable of smelling blood in the air.

“Of course you don’t. You and I are problem free. Nothing for us to feel horrible about,” Hannibal’s eyes gleamed, like he had told a particularly funny joke. The gears in Will’s head turned. They were trying to make a connection but couldn’t. Like he was building a puzzle with only half the pieces.

Will glanced toward the clock. 10 minutes left. Hannibal also noticed, but was a bit disappointed by the realization.

“I have a proposal,” Hannibal glided to his desk and scribbled on a paper. He held it for Will to read.

“You’re really rubber stamping me?” Will reached for the paper, but Hannibal snatched it from the tips of his fingers. What a tease.

“You’re totally functional and more or less sane. However, I still think you’ll need assistance in conquering the darkness Jack is subjecting you to. So I will “rubber stamp” you, as you so kindly referred to it, but you must continue your weekly meetings with me. If you miss one I’ll suggest a reevaluation and the process could be coupled with a lengthy review…”

“Deal,” Will held his hands out for the paper. Hannibal would get bored quickly, like a raven would leave the bones of a picked carcass. Will could survive a few more sessions. Feed the coyote but never allow it to roam far it’s designated territory under Will’s skin. He took the room in once more as he began to leave it, deciding it would provide ample space for the beast to stretch its legs. Weren’t ravens and coyotes fellow allies in scavenging?

Everything would be fine. Everything would be as it always was, meaning Will would get his hopes up and be met with disappointment as soon as things got comfortable. Hannibal kept his grin profession as he handed Will his coat.

“See you next week Will. I do quite look forward to it,”

“I bet you say that to all your patients,” Will smirked as he unceremoniously shoved his arm through his jacket.

Hannibal did say that to all his patients. This was the only time he’d ever meant it.

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Elliot guided the blade along the woman’s back. Through the windows the setting sun cast a burning light unto her. He smiled and lifted the flap of skin from her shuddering body.

“I know the pain is hard to bear, but no one can get into heaven without some tribulation. Just imagine Jesus on that cross. He was a perfect lamb transformed from his life of suffering.

Isn’t that comforting? That the pain we endure transforms us?”

Her dying exhale was loud and laborious. It reminded Elliot of the first breaths his children took out of the womb. He wiped the tears from her closed eyes, as he done for his children as they opened theirs for the first time not so long ago. The movement caused the taunt fishing line to dance in the last rays of sundown.

“Angels don’t cry,”

Elliot tucked himself into the stale blankets on top of a hard mattress. The Bible that all hotels have tucked under his stained pillow brought him comfort, but he didn’t dare turn off the bedside lamp. Last time he had awoken in the dark it had caused a profuse bout of fear vomiting that he would rather avoid. This time was different as there were two angels praying for him and a confident light source. There would be no sickness plaguing him tonight. He rolled over to his side, clutching the blanket.

“Angels don’t cry,” he reminded himself, as he did every night.

Elliot woke up. He threw up all over his alarm clock. He cried. He watched the sun rise through the window. He checked out of his hotel. He was not an Angel. He lived another day.

Chapter End Notes

Angel maker was always one of my favorite episodes I wish they had elongated his arc. But maybe that’s just cause I have a theological certification and religious traumas. Angels are kinda my thing

Also idk if anyone noticed but I parallel Hannibal using an open palm and Will’s dad using a closed one. I really like comparisons like that in writing so be on the lookout for them ♡´･ᴗ･`♡

Preaching to the Choir

Chapter Summary

Another victim of the Angel Maker

Another visit with creepy ass Hannibal

Nothing goes wrong

Chapter Notes

Sorry i took a week off I had the flu <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will rubbed his eyes. Another night proved to be a losing battle against insomnia. The phone call from Jack was almost a welcome sight. Anything to get out of that empty house would be. Maybe he should adopt a dog.

“What are your thoughts Graham?” Jack said.

Reluctantly, Will dropped his hands from his aching eyes. The security guard swayed slightly in the breeze above him and beneath him was a filthy mattress with two testicles positioned like presents under a Christmas tree. He couldn’t decide which sight made him more ill.

“Are there seriously balls over there?” Zeller gaped behind Will’s back like the pair might jump out and bite him.

“Why would Angel Maker cut the poor sucker’s balls off though?” Beverly rubbed her chin. They still hadn’t found any connection between the last victims and the killer’s current ones. The two at the motel were proving hard to identify.

“They’re not the victim’s… organs,” Will said, “I think that is the property of our dear killer here,”

Jack furrowed his brows. Why did Will always have to add little adjectives like that? The way Will referred to killers as anything other than monstrous was the entire reason Jack enlisted the help of Lecter. Was one session not enough?

“Why would he move to self mutilation?”

“He’s not just making angels, he is getting ready to become one,” Will pushed his glasses up his nose.

“Angels don’t have balls?” Zeller cupped his hand in the air and swayed it up and down, as if something heavy were in his palm.

“In the canon Bible, angels don’t have any genitalia,” Will scoffed.

“And you know this because?” Price raised his eyebrows.

“I grew up in Louisiana and you think I wasn’t dragged to church every other Sunday?”

“So he was afraid of dying but now he is ascending to it?” Jack interrupted.

“More like moved onto bargaining with the idea of death,”

“Big bargaining chips,” Beverly said as she placed the new evidence in a clear bag.

“So he’s done making angels now?” Jack said

“I don’t know,” Will felt his bottom lip begin to bleed. He hadn’t even remembered biting it that hard.

“Well how is he choosing them?” Jack stepped closer to Will causing the latter to roll his shoulders. Jack always knew how to bunch the muscles there.

“Listen Jack I can only see what he wants me to. If you want better answers you’ll have to get them from someone else. Maybe your own damn self every once in a while,” Will spit out as he shoved his glasses into his jacket pocket. Instantly he wished to swallow the words back down. The air dropped ten degrees cooler.

“I didn’t just hear that,” Jack closed the small distance between them. Will caved immediately.

“No you’re right. You didn’t hear anything,” Will rubbed his sweaty palms up and down the rough texture of his jeans. After grounding himself he apologized to Jack but said nothing more the rest of the night to him.

Will would need the materials to extensively research religious figures. Stifling a groan, he realized exactly the person and the too-neat-and-tidy office he’d have to visit. Again.

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Hannibal’s lip twitched at the sound of a knock. He didn’t have any appointments and no one had communicated with him about an impromptu visit. What bad manners and big balls this little visitor had.

Carefully, he placed his pencil down from the sketch he had been working on for a week. A deep breath in and a deep breath out reigned in his composure again before he opened the door with his usual smirk.

“Will. What a pleasant surprise. I wasn’t expecting you today,” Hannibal let his smile widen slightly. Eyes couldn’t help but stay ever a moment longer on Will’s bleeding lip. How the man loved to tempt his poor psychiatrist.

“Sorry Dr. Lecter. I needed to borrow your library, but realized I don’t have your phone number saved,” Will scratched the back of his heated neck. He hated asking people for help. Hannibal loved making him do it.

“That is a problem we can remedy quickly,” Hannibal held out his hand. Will, ever on the uptake, unlocked his phone and handed it over so Hannibal could enter in his information. Hannibal locked the access code to memory, thankful Will was even distrustful of technology like facial recognition. The code would definitely come in handy for future activities.

“If you’re busy I can come another time,” Will’s eyes darted inside the office, no doubt worried he had interrupted a session.

“You have caught me at a great time, I am yours to use,” Hannibal chuckled internally at Will’s open disgust for the phrasing, “Please do come in,”

Will sped walked to the first book shelf, still amazed it stretched from floor to ceiling and was still packed. He would rather bite his tongue off then have another brain battle with the rattlesnake wrapped in a pretty skin suit but no library within range was open this late. Honestly, Will hadn’t expected Hannibal to still be here.

Instead of sleeping, Will had been tossing and turning about this case. The house was too quiet to think about much else and his brain was too loud to sleep. He figured he might as well give it a shot, and if Lecter wasn’t here maybe the drive would tire him out enough to sleep.

Since Will hardly knew what books were actually contained in someone else’s office, he provided Hannibal a rundown of the latest events and profiles on the case. The entire time Hannibal listened attentively with his hands clasped behind his back, never letting his eyes off Will. The intensity made Will stutter a few times. He wasn’t used to people listening to his rambles without bouts of yelling (Jack) or interrupting with questions of clarification (Bev).

In actuality Hannibal was hardly listening about the Angel Maker. He was thinking about what to get Will for Christmas and how to make sure the man couldn’t refuse it. He didn’t seem the type to keenly accept what he viewed as a handout. Will became a bit more excited in his speaking which involuntarily made Hannibal feel like he was sucking on a sour lemon.

Save that sort of expression and excitement for the Ripper only.

“Any idea of god comes from a multitude of areas in the brain working in unison. There isn’t a single spiritual center,” Hannibal began. He was mentally cataloging what books would give Will a hint without revealing too much.

“Maybe my profile was wrong. I’m not sure how to profile someone with an anomaly affecting their cognitive function,”

“It seems that Angel Maker’s driving force is a simpler issue that most people have. A impending sense of their own mortality,”

“Can’t beat God become him?” Will shifted his weight from leg to leg. Sweat slightly rolled down his back as Hannibal circled the office. He felt like a stranded diver in a deep ocean being hunted by something bloodthirsty in the water.

“You said he feels afraid,” Hannibal hungrily caught Will’s stare with his own eyes.

“No, he feels abandoned,” Will felt a throb in his chest.

“Do you feel abandoned Will?”

“Wouldn’t feeling abandoned first require any expectations? I don’t have those,” Will scoffed

“No expectations for Jack Crawford? The FBI?”

“They haven’t abandoned me,”

“Not in the physical sense. The mental and spiritual, the way a god may abandon its creation. You say he hasn’t abandoned you but he leaves you to sleepless nights and waking nightmares. Your brain practically eats itself with worry,”

Hannibal climbed his step ladder to reach his top shelf. He looked at some covers and put some back, more shuffling the books around then looking at if they’d help or not. Give him an inch but not a mile. That way Will would keep coming back for advice and sessions.

“Wow I mean I knew our great doctor was accredited but to know everything about a patient from two conversations. You truly are one of a kind. Please doctor continue,” Will leaned against the desk and crossed his arms.

“Jack promised to protect you. Are you feeling protected?”
Let me protect you

“Are you trying to alienate me from Jack?” Will felt his headache come back with a relish. Lack of sleep left him with a feeling of permanent sickness, as if he was walking around with a cold at all times.

Hannibal tossed two books into Will’s waiting arms. Inwardly he tsked at Will’s perception. Of course the entire reason Hannibal was so infatuated with the agent was because of how stimulating Graham’s keen intellect was, but couldn’t the man let Hannibal get away with just a little manipulation?

“I’m trying to help you to understand,” Hannibal held Will in his fierce gaze allowing the pause to be noticeable. Only after Will felt every single neck hair raise in alarm did he break eye contact.

“I need help on how to catch him. I understand him perfectly fine,” Will mumbled.

“If he is how you’ve profiled him, as paranoid, you can influence him to be visible,”

“What, you want to terrify him into the light? Very biblical approach,”

“He might even hurt himself,”

“If he was self destructive he wouldn’t be this… careful,”

“Unless he is quite careful about being self-destructive. It would not be the only thing you two had in common,” Hannibal climbed down from the second story and stalked toward his desk.

Since first laying his eyes on the doctor, Will had been jealous of his confidence. He glided through rooms and conversation like a shark glides through water. There was never a wasted movement, never a moment without him moving as the definition of both predator and elegance. Will just so happened to be the only person to see all the rows of this shark’s teeth when he smiled that devilish smirk. Meanwhile, Will floundered in everything. His home life, worklife, any relationship, and even his own sweat. He’d grown so tired of washing sheets every day now he slept on towels.

“Enlighten me doctor with what else I have in common with a serial killer,” Will pretended to be annoyed.

“You seek understanding,”
I understand you like no one else
“You are afraid of the world but can’t help wanting to save it”
Let me save you
“You seek salvation,”
Let me give it to you Will

Will silently turned to place the two books inside his worn satchel. Dry heat crept up his neck while he tried to decide if Hannibal was making fun of him or actually viewed Will in such a way. Will had never considered himself such a righteous, naive person as what the Angel Maker displayed.

Hannibal materialized behind him in an instant with intentions to tease but his nostrils flared instead. He blinked several times. Will had a nasty cold brewing in that soup bowl skull of his. Hannibal couldn’t help taking a larger whiff of that sticky sweet, hot aroma.

“Did…you just… smell me,” Will instinctively wished he had some pepper spray. All the inner turmoil of Hannibal’s flirting disappeared in an instant. Did I almost think this freak was smooth?

Hannibal snapped out of his daze and allowed blush to ever so slightly dust his cheeks.

“Difficult to avoid. I simply must introduce you to a finer aftershave,”

“I’ll stop wearing it when I stop receiving it at Christmas every year,” Will chuckled.

Hannibal again felt his mood sour slightly. Who was giving Will presents every year? He had done research (stalking) and found that Will had nothing to do with his parents, lived alone,

and rarely left his house for anything but work. Although Will does slow down every time he passes a certain shelter. Maybe Hannibal needed a dog just in time for Christmas. The shiniest lure always catches the biggest fish.

Will jolted as his phone rang, hardly used to the thing making noise. Hannibal inwardly sighed at the thought of their meeting ending so quickly. Even if it had been the better part of an hour, time with Will moved so much faster.

“It’s Price, they have a match on the victims,” Will snatched his satchel and made his way out of the office. Once his hand was on the door handle he worked up the courage to say,

“Thank you for the books and the … conversation. I will return them,”

Hannibal smiled with his canines and said, “Anytime you need something please ask me for help first,”

Will retreated before Hannibal could comment on his beet red face. Hardly able to open the door from his sweaty palm, the man forgot his coat completely. Hannibal stared at its sway on the coat rack with half lidded eyes, knowing it was another way he could make Will see him again. This boy was really turning Hannibal into quite the glutton.

Chapter End Notes

Angel maker arc concludes next chapter :-) (if Elliot let’s me)

Sermon on the Mount

Chapter Summary

Angel Maker is found,
But who is the one that was captured?
Will is fine
Like always
Nothing goes wrong

Chapter Notes

I wrote this as I was drinking Dr. Pepper out of my 2 Liter in my whiskey glass (that I bought specifically to drink dr. Pepper in) with my both my dogs and cats in my lap and that tells you all you need to know about me

~this chapter was a little longer so hopefully the flow is ok~

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Alright Will here is a hard one. Fuck, Marry, Kill. Chilton, Jack, Dr. Lecter." Beverly walked beside Will on their way to see Price about the new identities of the victims. Will scrunched his brows.

"That is an impossible one. Kill all of them,"

"You're no fun! Fine, I'll go first. Killing Jack, fucking Chilton, marrying Lecter. That guy looks loaded and Chilton would last like 2 minutes so I could handle a one night stand," Beverly sipped her coffee. Will rolled his eyes and wondered what kind of person drank coffee well into the night like this.

"Ok well I'm killing Jack too,"

"No offense taken guys," Jack rubbed his temples while he walked behind them. These two played this game constantly, usually designating Jack as their "kill" option. It had stopped phasing him after the 4th game. The pair ignored him as they always did.

"Fucking Lecter, marrying Chilton. After our wedding I'm killing him though and taking his money,"

“Chilton has enough money to kill over but Lecter doesn’t?” Beverly took Fredrick for more as a guy that looked like he had money, but only had credit card debt. Will shrugged.

“Chilton has more than I do. Plus I’m not sure I could take Lecter in a fight, but I could take him in—“

“WILL,” Jack sighed.

Beverly snorted but Will’s rebuttal died on his lips as Price rounded the corner with a thick envelope.

“Meet our lovely new residents, Roger and Maryland Bruner. One likes to murder, one gets off on watching. Took so long to ID them cause they were running from the FBI’s most wanted list. Falsified registry AND a stolen car. Quite the experienced duo we have here,”

“How did he find him when the FBI couldn’t? There was no way he knew they were criminals,” Beverly tossed her cup into the trash. Caffeine slightly helped with her growing exhaustion headache.

“Well our alleyway Angel wasn’t just a security guard, but he was a convicted felon posing as one,” Price popped a piece of gum in his mouth. He hoped Beverly got the hint.

“So what? We have a vigilante on our hands?”

“He isn’t a vigilante. Vigilantes are purposeful. They’re Pragmatic. They don’t lay and sleep under their crimes and express remorse and guilt and…he’s just not a vigilante. Not in a traditional sense at least,” Will shifted from foot to foot.

“So what’s his motivation Graham?”

“In his mind he was doing god’s work “

“The work of making angels out of demons? Gotta introduce this guy to some of my exes,” Beverly wiggled her eyebrows. She tactfully ignored Price’s hint at her coffee breath. God she loved getting under that dude’s skin.

“How does he know they’re demons?” Price slid the Bruners back into their selective morgue cabinets.

“Doesn’t have to know, just has to believe. We better start checking the cancer databases,” Will took out his phone and texted to see a certain someone’s availability tomorrow. His thoughts were constantly tangled wires and speaking them out loud always helped straighten them. Speaking with Hannibal not only untangled them but pointed him in a whole new direction. Even though he wanted to figure this out he could feel himself nodding off and didn’t wanna miss the chance to sleep.

“Going back for more already?” Beverly nudged her elbow to his. Will felt himself go slightly red.

“I forgot my coat at his office. He just is offering to give it back to me,”

“Hmm I don’t recall saying who you were going to see,”

Will realized his misstep and clenched his jaw, “I’m going home to sleep,”

“So I heard we got some more news on our little messenger of god?” Zeller walked in with two coffees. One for each hand.

“Shut up Zeller,” Will walked past him and practically sprinted to his car to avoid Beverly’s teasing. Zeller blinked twice.

“What did I miss?”

“You’ve got the worst timing,” Price and Beverly said in unison. They each took a coffee out of Zeller’s hand.

“Those were for me motherfuckers!”

Jack rubbed his temples. He patted Zeller’s shoulder as he left the room with the other two.

“Next time bring three Zeller,”

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Will stood outside. In his underwear he allowed the cold to litter his skin in goosebumps. Shadows danced across the woods surrounding his home. One of the branch shadows reached all the way to his porch steps, causing him to take an unconscious step back.

His skull felt like it was trying to boil an egg inside it so he continued to stand in the biting cold. Will didn’t have time to be sick. Didn’t have anyone to take care of him. Plus he was weird when he was sick so he didn’t want anyone around him anyways.

Heat rushed to his cheeks for an entirely different reason. Tomorrow he was getting coffee with Lecter in hopes of gaining more insight into the Angel Maker and getting his comfort coat back.

In actuality, Will had Angel Maker’s personality pinned down. Somewhere deep in his churning gut he knew that getting closer to Lecter was a mistake. No concrete evidence, no red flags, just the gears in his head twisting and evaluating, as they always did.

Was it so bad if he just wanted to fuck a hot ass doctor? Damn. Did everything have to be ~oh what if they abandon me~ ~what if it’s a mistake~

It wasn’t like the guy was a serial killer.

“What if it’s a good fuck and nothing more,” Will said aloud to no one. In the back of his fevered mind Will knew it would never be so simple. Something savage lurked in Hannibal’s eyes, in his gait, his grin, his generosity. Despite it all he found himself falling into the spider’s web. Perhaps he wished to be devoured instead of ripping his wings off to get off the web.

Will looked at his surroundings. He didn't know when but he had begun walking while so deep in thought. Quickly, he returned the 150 yards to his house. This wasn't a habit he should allow himself to be used to he thought as he bit his lip. At least now he felt tired enough to sleep for a couple hours.

Dreams still plagued Will's mind that night. They were dreams of demons and angels and Satan having a soft accent and an office with an alluring amount of books.

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Hannibal checked his watch. Never had he expected for Will to reach out first and never expected a meeting in such a casual setting as a coffee shop. The corners of his lips tugged upward.

It felt like a date.

For a hunter of Hannibal's degree, surprise was hardly commonplace. Will had managed to accomplish it quite a few times already. He thought of revising his current plan for Will's becoming to allow himself and the agent some more time together.

A bell tinkled to his right and he crossed his legs in excitement once he saw Will enter the building. Although, the man looked haggard with dark circles and greasy curls. He hadn't changed clothes since last Hannibal saw him nearly two days ago.

"Sorry I'm a little late. There was a dog on the road and I kept trying to get close but it wouldn't let me," Will's eyes darted to and fro. Hannibal debated slipping something into his coffee to force the poor boy to sleep. The only thing that Will was allowed to go clinically insane over was Hannibal.

"Will, how have your nightmares been progressing?"

Will ignored the question and filled Hannibal in on the case. Lecter felt his jaw tick at Will's tactless avoidance but decided to choose his battles wisely. This could be used for his favor.

"So god is giving Angel Maker insight?"

"Insight? God gave him a tumor not insight," Will snorted. The surrounding area was blurry but his mind still clicked like a well maintained clock. Bitter coffee assaulted his senses and grounded him better then any therapy session.

"So they are seeking peace? They must be seeking a kind of peace they have never felt often. A once in a lifetime peace,"

Will stood as the pieces fell into place with his mental puzzle, "So we need someone that had a near death experience! This will narrow down the search,"

Hannibal clutched Will's wrist. So this punk agent wanted to drag him all the way out here just for a short conversation about a serial killer? Hannibal wouldn't let it simply be that.

"Will. How have the nightmares been?"

“Fine,” Will swallowed. He didn’t have the courage to tell Hannibal he had a dream his therapist was a sacrilegious figure feeding him forbidden fruit. Might make his next sessions a touch more awkward.

“How often are you sleeping? Are you working on the sleep hygiene practices we discussed over the phone?” Hannibal continued to hold Will’s wrist, enjoying the feeling of a pulse under his fingers.

Will shrugged. Once or twice already he had attempted to nonchalantly pull his wrist away. Cold sweat pooled in his lower back when he realized he couldn’t. Realization of Hannibal having physical and mental advantages over him caused his neck hairs to stand on end.

“Angel Maker is being destroyed by his own mind. The tumor is eating him from inside out. Tell me Will, will you allow your own mind to swallow you whole?” Hannibal released Will. He felt his point was proven enough.

If it had been anyone else in the team Will would have told them that he had something they could go ahead and swallow, but couldn’t gather the gall to quirk it at Hannibal.

“I’m not flaying people into mythical creatures to get over the fear of a tumor,” Will rubbed his wrist. Once again, a headache began brewing behind his eyes. The fever medicine was wearing off…

“I know you want to update Jack, why don’t I drive you? You obviously haven’t slept properly in some time. I don’t quite feel comfortable allowing you behind the wheel,” Hannibal arose, smoothing out his non-existent wrinkles across the midsection.

Will could hardly keep his eyes open, much less think of an argument for why he should be allowed behind a wheel. He nodded. Hannibal slightly smiled. A tiger stalking toward a rabbit that didn’t even know it was being hunted.

“Let me buy you another coffee. Go ahead and wait in the car,” Hannibal cupped Will’s hand and placed keys into it. He cataloged how clammy Will’s skin was as Will cataloged how cool Hannibal’s hand was. They simultaneously thought it was a perfect temperature to hold.

“Ok…thank you,” Will squeezed Hannibal’s hand before he lost the nerve. Hannibal waited until Will was out of the coffee shop before he smiled fully. He waited to put the half crushed sleeping pill in Will’s coffee until the man was comfortably in Hannibal’s passenger seat.

Hopefully this would teach the man some caution Hannibal thought wickedly.

Will texted Jack he would be coming in office shortly to discuss some new theories in person. To give them a head start he texted Jack the new basic points but promised to expound in person. All Jack sent was a thumbs up emoji, so Will watched Hannibal walk toward his car.

With a start Will realized they would have an entire hour car ride to sit in silence. Unconsciously Will felt his eyes widen. Fuck he was bad at small talk. For not the first time today Will realized calling Hannibal had been impulsive and looked desperate.

The therapist had made it quite clear when Will made these plans this impromptu meeting would not count as their weekly therapy session. Instead of waiting Will had opted into meeting at the coffee shop and going to therapy the next day.

It made him feel like a high schooler that had a crush on his tutor. No wonder Beverly had called him shameless. It wasn't his fault thinking straight (pun intended) had become harder recently.

Hannibal slipped into the driver's seat and handed Will the coffee in one motion. After the man fell asleep Lecter would begin mentally preparing the next dinner party. Perhaps by then he could have enough trust to convince Will to come.

"I apologize I forgot your coat. I plan to give it back to you during our session tomorrow," Hannibal had yet to wash it. He wanted to give Will something that smelled like him. Slowly and carefully he planned to tame through small actions. Like this Will wouldn't even realize he was taken in so completely, unable and unwilling to separate from his owner.

Will made a noncommittal noise. Already the cup was being picked apart by his anxious claws. The fever reduced his already socially inept brain to a puddle. He began sipping the coffee frantically, ignoring that Hannibal knew his order after hearing it once.

"Are you going back for the stray after the case?" Hannibal said as he turned onto the interstate. Will scratched his neck.

"I want to help it, but I'm not sure I'm a good fit for it. I'm hardly home," Will didn't mention he also barely held himself together, much less taking care of a dog.

"I could always feed it once in a while. Coparenting," Hannibal said. Will blushed and thought for the hundredth time how utterly shameless his new coworker was.

"I couldn't ask you to do that for me," Will let his head lay against the cool window. Hannibal covertly knocked the heat up.

"Doing things for others brings me joy as well you know," Hannibal thought about what to garnish kidneys with in the weeks to come. Will's hot breath fogged the window as his eyelids grew heavier.

"Mmm I don't know. You hardly talk about yourself. You just come in here like a robot made to be like perfect or everything and it's so infuriating," Will felt his speech slur as he struggled to stay awake. The heat swirled in his body and mixed with the heat of the fever, practically cradling him. Sweat beaded at his temple.

"You think I'm perfect?" Hannibal teased.

"Think you're hiding something. That's ok though, it just makes me wanna figure you…" Will let his jaw go slack in surrendering to the tugs of exhaustion. Hannibal tucked a sweaty curl behind Will's ear so he could see the man's face contort in fever fueled nightmares.

“You’ll figure me out eventually,” Hannibal licked his finger and made a mental decision about the kidney garnish. Will always gave him inspiration in the most dire times.

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“Elliot Budisch, 35, truck driver. He was a match with our cancer database and profile,” Zeller handed a tablet to Jack. The man staring back at him was plain and looked to be well into sickness when the picture was taken. Hopelessness pooled in eyes brighter than any tears.

“And he was diagnosed 5 months ago, was reported missing by wife Emma and two kids 4 months ago,” Beverly popped in.

“Bev! You stole my thunder…” Zeller pouted.

“Eww only Will can call me that,” Beverly poked Zeller in the ribs.

“Call his wife in. I want to speak to her myself,” Jack handed the tablet back to Zeller. Sometimes he felt he was the head teacher at a daycare, not the FBI.

Jack put on a pot of coffee in preparation for seeing Emma and his trouble child. What he didn’t expect was for Hannibal to walk through his office doors before either of them.

Even in this type of weather Lecter was the picture of a professional, all blood red three piece suit with a matching long coat.

“Agent Crawford,” Hannibal slithered in, “Dear William was a bit too tired to drive so I held the honor of driving him here. He fell asleep in the car so I am allowing him to sleep,”

“As long as he is awake before the suspect’s wife is here for questioning,” Jack waved him off.

“I think Will needs a break,” Hannibal leaned back in his chair with his lip in a tight line. Obviously he wasn’t here to negotiate but to be a voice of authority.

“Did Graham tell you that in one of your sessions?”

“Will and I’s session don’t concern you. I am in no obligation to give you any insight into our conversations since I’ve deemed Will capable of working. This is my professional— ah no I should say my personal concern as Will’s medical advocate that you are pushing him too far,” Hannibal raised his chin slightly in a defiant air.

Jack let out a humorless laugh. Medical advocate? Wasn’t Lecter putting himself a bit high on the Will totem pole? Who the fuck fired this guy in the first place? First Alana was constantly buzzing in his ear about Will this and Will that, like some hovering older sister, now Lecter too? How charming was Will to have so many doting companions…

“I think Will can decide for himself when enough is enough,” Jack hardened his gaze. Nothing came before saving innocents.

“Hard for him to decide clearly when his brain is plagued with the constant problems of the FBI,”

“I started this little relationship so Will could get better. Get some help with the darkness he sees. Don’t make me take it away,” Jack spat.

Hannibal gazed up at him through his eyelashes. He smoothed nonexistent wrinkles at his midsection to quell the fire ignited there. His stomach growled at the thought of serving Jack on a silver plate to Will.

Will was a simple man with simple tastes. First Hannibal would soak the meat overnight in a spice marinade. When Will was on his way Hannibal would thinly slice the meat across Jack’s midsection and sauté it simply in a pan. Served with a side of greens and a bitter chocolate reduction. On a silver fork he’d hand feed it. And Will would like it. Will would thank him for the meal. Will would want to stay the night.

The short burst of imagination sated Hannibal’s anger. For a time.

“As you said Will makes his own decisions. You can’t stop him from being my friend and conversing with me, just like I can’t force him to know his worth enough to take a break from a job that isn’t appreciating his contributions,”

Jack scoffed, “Will doesn’t have friends and he definitely wouldn’t be friends with a therapist who just wanted to analyze him under a microscope. He has you as a professional curiosity and nothing more. Know your place Lecter, you’ve only known him for a week!”

“I have friends,” Will said softly. Jack nearly jumped out of his skin. He turned and behind him stood a red faced Graham. Whether it was anger or embarrassment Jack couldn’t tell.

20 minutes ago

Will cracked his eyes open. His mouth felt dry and his headache had calmed down to a dull ache. After taking in his surroundings he realized he was in one of the break rooms at Quantico. The one closest to his lecture hall.

“Do you feel better?” Alana walked into his field of vision, her heels making soft noises on the tile. Will knew his ears looked like they would catch fire at any moment. Now that a colleague was in his presence, one he respected very much, he felt the dried drool on the corner of his mouth and could only imagine the smell his dried sweat had. She handed him a cup of water.

“Better,” he said weakly. He downed the entire cup in one gulp.

“Hannibal brought you in here. Said you really needed the sleep and I volunteered to watch over you until you woke up,” Alana said with affection. Whether it was affection for Hannibal or Will was unclear.

Will spit out the water in his mouth, “Lecter carried me in here?”

“Will, I could probably carry you in here. You’re not exactly hard to manhandle,”

“Well Alana it was nice working with you but I think I’ll be going to die of embarrassment now, tell Beverly I said goodbye,” Will plopped his defeated head into his defeated hands. Alana shifted her weight from foot to foot.

“About that…”

“Oh no,” Will mumbled.

“Beverly kinda…” Alana cleared her throat and said the words too fast.

“Oh god Alana spit it out,”

“She… got a picture of you… your screen saver,” Alana coughed. Will ripped his phone off the desk and clicked it on. To his horror his new screensaver was a half blurry picture of his arm slung around Hannibal’s shoulders and Hannibal with his arm around Will’s hip for support. Will’s mouth was agape and sweating into Hannibal’s suit. While Lecter wasn’t looking at the camera but Will could tell his eyes were laughing. Oh he was gonna kill them both.

“Dr. Bloom, where is Dr. Lecter and Miss Katz?” Will slid his phone in his pocket. Alana felt a shiver up her spine. No way in hell she was getting in the middle of this one (she definitely would).

“Hannibal is in Jack’s office…”

“Let’s get him out of the way first. Beverly will have a swifter and heavier hand of justice after all,”

As they walked down the long corridors Will felt his anger cool slightly. Alana had rescued a cat recently so they discussed its well-being. She was fretting over leaving it since the feline’s health has taken a turn for the worst this week. It had a fever constantly and mewed all night in its sleep, as if plagued with nightmares.

Beverly smartly remained hidden from Will’s sight.

As soon as Will approached Jack’s office he could hear the man’s booming voice through the walls. His hand hovered over the door handle as 4 words slapped him across the face.

Will Doesn’t Have Friends

Will bit his bottom lip. Blood headed under the indent of his canine. He knew Jack thought of him more as a robot that solved crimes and went home to charge and came back for more the next day, but hearing him say something so direct stung.

Alana shoved the door open with a mouth full of argument. Will tugged her sleeve and shook his head. He didn’t need his coworker to fight his battles for him.

“I have friends,”

That was all Will could manage to say. Tirelessly, Will had worked to be helpful. To be good at his job and have a good relationship with his coworkers and save the public and please his boss.

Why was it never enough?

Why was he always that child in the run down house? The one that the neighborhood kids weren't allowed to play with? The child no mother or father could stand to be around? Always the one who was left alone.

Why were his efforts never enough?

Alana placed a tight hand on his shoulder but the weight of expectation held in it felt scalding, so he ducked away from it.

"Will that isn't— no what I meant was—" Jack started but stopped when Will held a hand up.

"Don't explain yourself to me. Just call me when you need me again. Like you always do," Will swallowed the lump in his throat and left the office to go back toward his classroom. A box of safety and acceptance. It was the one place people sometimes looked up to him.

Alana and Hannibal equally shot Jack a scathing look before trailing after Will. Hannibal kept his chuckle in. How could one be the head of behavioral analysis but still be so easy to manipulate?

"Actually Emma will be here soon," Jack said to the empty room then collapsed into his desk chair.

"This day can't get any worse,"

And then the day got much worse.

Emma Budisch bit her nails. She hadn't done the nervous tic since a wedding ring adorned her finger. Elliot was her source of calm. He reached for her like Jesus had lifted a drowning Peter from a turbulent ocean. Now he was gone.

And wanted by the FBI.

"Mrs Budisch, thank you for meeting us on such short notice," Jack shook her hand and noted the sweat accumulated in her palm.

"Has Elliot done something dangerous? I filed the missing person report months ago and no way it got moved up to FBI priority unless something bad has happened. Is he… alive?"

"We believe your husband might be involved in an open case. How did he act before disappearing?"

Emma began to pick at the stitching on her jeans, "he wanted to be alone. After his diagnosis I took a leave from work. All I wanted was to be there for him since he had always done the same for me,"

“When did you notice him changing?” Jack questioned, taking light notes in a random notepad for Elliot’s file.

“It was obvious he didn’t want me there. Everyday he was more distant, making excuses to avoid conversations, I was suddenly sleeping next to a stranger,”

Jack felt like his heart was shoved into a garbage disposal. Why was this sounding so familiar?

Will tapped his leg waiting for Jack to ask the next question. Jack just stared glossy eyed with a hand on his chest. Damn it, Jack had told him he wouldn’t have to do the talking!

“Had Elliot ever been violent?” Will cleared his throat. His voice was still hoarse from the confrontation earlier. It had taken running around in circles and hiding in a closet to avoid Hannibal and Alana’s hovering. Emma let out a humorless chuckle.

“Violent? Never. He never laid a hand on me or the boys. Angry? Unbelievably so. A righteous anger that consumed everything. Including the old Elliot. My Elliot,”

Will darted his eyes from Emma to Jack. He sighed when Jack still wouldn’t take the lead back.

“Did his faith ever falter after the news?”

“Faith? Elliot wasn’t really the religious type,”

“None at all?”

“Not really, once he almost died in a barn from some freak fire accident. The firefighters told him his guardian angel must have been praying exceptionally hard that day,” Emma swallowed, “Is Elliot doing something religious?”

“Jack!” Will snapped his fingers in front of the agent’s face. Jack blinked a few times, not allowing the tears to adorn his cheeks.

“Where did Mrs.Budisch go ?”

“I just walked her out of course. Come on I have an address for where I think Elliot is,” Will decided against asking Jack what had stirred such a reaction. He only cared about his friend’s troubles anyways. Apparently he didn’t have any of those.

The ride over was uneventful. Silence enveloped the pair other than the GPS droned instructions. Jack gripped the wheel too tight. Will allowed his mind to hard boil his brain like an egg. Right when Will’s volcanic eruption was reaching a peak Jack spoke.

“I think Bella has cancer,”

Will could ignore the lack of apology. He wasn’t used to those anyways. Will could ignore Jack staining the air with his unbridled pain, knowing it would trigger Will’s uncontrollable empathy. He was used to seeing too much. Will could ignore Jack waiting until they were in a

confined space, alone, after Will was feeling raw emotions from an argument, to bring up such a heavy topic.

Will could ignore it all because even though he was abrasive it didn't mean he didn't seek human connection. Independence was important to Will, but it didn't mean he wanted to be utterly alone. His nails made indentions in the seat at the thought of what utter abandonment felt like.

So Will ignored Jack's selfish attempt at comfort. Will was only comforting him for his own selfish desires anyways.

"I'm sorry," Will spoke the words he was desperate to hear from Jack's mouth.

The pair didn't utter another word until the barn came into view.

Will was disappointed that Elliot was dead. A pitfall of an interest in serial killers was by the time Will met them they either killed themselves or were going crazy in a bird cage from the state.

Elliot kneeled along the hay scattered floor with his hands clutched so tightly in prayer that even after death they remained white among his knuckles. His wings were the most beautiful of all the angels so far, maybe because he had been the only good person so far.

Jack cursed and kicked a barn pole. Even though Will had wanted to have at least one interaction with Angel Ma— Elliot, he was glad that the man didn't have to interact with Jack's turbulent emotions.

Jack…I'm not sure how much longer I can be useful. It's getting harder and harder to look at it all," Will blurted. It wasn't the right time and he knew it, but he felt Elliot lodge a thorn in his heart. He had to say it now or he might never have this courage again.

"You're doing fine, Will. You're saving lives everyday,"

"I didn't save Elliot," Will closed his eyes. The setting sun blanketed a warmth unto his face through the shattered window. It would be comforting if he wasn't already pouring sweat from every pore on his face.

"But you'll save the next one, and the one after that," Jack raised his voice and hands in unison.

"That's the problem. I can make myself look but the thinking is shutting down because all I can think about is the next one and the one after that,"

"That's why you have Lecter, and Bloom, Beverly, and hell even me. You're not alone,"

"But I am alone. I've always been alone and I'm still looking alone. You haven't even taken more than a glance at Elliot since arriving. He will stay in my nightmares for the rest of my life,"

"You know what happens when you don't look," Jack let his shoulders slump in defeat.

Will opened his mouth. No sound came out so he closed it.

“So what? You wanna go back to your lectures? Read about this shit on TattleCrime? If you run back to that lecture hall it will only sour that safe space for you,”

“I don’t know what else to do,” Will’s voice cracked. The heat was overpowering him now, drying his mouth to dust.

“You wanna quit Graham? Then quit. I’m not your fucking father,” Jack walked back to his car to call the crime scene cleaners. Since the interview with Emma his world was crumbling one foundational beam at a time.

Will wiped the sweat from his brow, begging his hands to stop their turbulent shaking. Once he turned away from the barn entrance back toward Elliot’s body he froze. Elliot’s eyes bore into his with a near peaceful expression. Or it would be peaceful if the tears weren’t streaming from the corners of them.

“Something wicked has touched you. You must depart from it quickly if you wish to be saved. There isn’t much time,”

“What do you see?” Will held his gaze. It bore such acceptance that Will wished he could climb into it. To bypass his socket and into the brain, to cuddle in the curves of Elliot’s brain, to feast upon his tumor and become it.

Elliot lightly grazed Will’s forehead and Will allowed him to.

“Revelation 13:11 ‘Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon’. Your horns are just hardly peaking through now. You’ve been marked for a becoming. It is a deadly and demonic act, ” Elliot slid his hand to cup Will’s cheek.

“What else do you see?” Will let out a hoarse whisper.

“You look so much like my son. I think he’ll grow up to look just like you.” Elliot swayed, obviously losing strength in his conviction as his hand slid from Will’s face, “ I hope he does not share your fate,”

Elliot fell to his knees so hard Will heard them crack against the dirt floor. His last breath shuttered into the air as if god themself had ripped it from Elliot’s lungs. Will began to shake uncontrollably, his stomach shifting and squirming as if it were trapped in his body needing any escape.

Will pressed a finger to the place that Elliot had. He inhaled sharply as his finger came back bloody. Cut on his ever forming horns.

“Will?” Jack said. Will turned to him, his eyes blazing with an unfathomable heat.

“Help me,” he vomited, “He gave me his tumor!” Will continued to heave and his stomach continued to wriggle inside of him.

“Get in the car Will I’m taking you to the doctor,” Jack grabbed him but Will shot out of reach.

“Get it out of me Jack!” He abandoned his stomach and clawed at his forehead until blood was pouring into his eyes. The heat inside was unbearable, cooking his brain like an oven, Will couldn’t escape it.

“Will you’re hurting yourself,” Jack exclaimed. Desperately, he gave up on restraining Will and phoned an ambulance.

Will could feel it, the horns molding and extending past his forehead, but was powerless to stop the growth. Finally, he stared at the shadow they created, zig zagging across the barn, stabbing Elliot and Jack’s shadow, until they reached the shoes of a third shadow. Will blinked. There wasn’t a body to cast that shadow in this barn. Why didn’t they stab that shadow? No matter how much closer he walked to that shadow his antlers never touched anything more than its feet.

“God above, it burns,” Will clutched his horns as they burned their way to the sky, The closer he got to this third shadow the hotter his head became. There was a siren blaring in the distance and the sun burning in his face.

The last thing Will felt was his head connect to the ground, splintering his antlers around him.

***

Alana placed her coat on the kitchen island. In her laundry room she opened the small box that her kitten was recovering in. She sniffled at the stiff body that lay in it.

Her kitten was dead. Succumbed to its sickness.

In the kitchen Alana’s phone rang.

Chapter End Notes

The dreaded cliffhanger :o whatever will happen

Also please ignore how dreadful that scene of Hannibal cooking Jack was. I literally eat peanut butter sandwiches how do I know what pairs with meat

The Trinity

Chapter Summary

Will recovers from his medical break
Alana and Hannibal try to help
Nothing goes wrong

Chapter Notes

Serious moment, I know this is a non-popular random Hannibal fanfic but don't forget to support Free Palestine 🇵🇸 Free Congo Free Sudan. I encourage you to boycott McDonald's Disney and Starbucks as the main targets of the boycott. Money talks.

https://bdsmovement.net/get-involved

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will peeled his eyelids open. Harsh, fluorescent lights shone through his eyelashes and caused them to flutter in and out of focus.

"Open your mouth," The Devil stood above him. His shadow blocked the light with arching antlers and wide shoulders. His suit was a deep red with dark aftertones weaved into it. Something warm pressed to Will's lips and he reflectively closed his lips tighter.

The Devil blew a rush of air at this action, as if Will's resistance was merely their favorite form of amusement.

"It's soup. Good soup I'd say since I made it myself. It will help with your recovery," The Devil prattled on about the health benefits of his offering and continued trying to push the warm spoon past Will's tight lips.

Weakly, he tried to lift his arm and push The Devil away. Through instincts alone he knew he must escape this thing at all cost. The gears of his mind were attempting to start again, but it felt as if they were trying to grind with no oil.

"I wouldn't try to move much if I were you. The sedation hasn't quite worn off yet,"

"Elliot told me about you. Devil man…I won't consume your poison any longer," Will spit out. Unfortunately, this was an opportune time for the spoon to be shoved into his open mouth.

“Those are brave words but this isn’t poison. As I mentioned it’s soup of my own creation,”

A clap of thunder startled Will into gripping the rough blanket he was wrapped in. His heart flew against his rib cage like a bird against a cage and his eyes darted wildly around the room. That was when he spotted it.

God Herself. Head to toe in her white garb She approached him.

Light radiated from her face as she hovered closer. The blinding radiance was worse than the overhanging lights so Will shut his eyes. Her skin was soft as She cradled his hand.

“Will I’m so happy you’re lucid. You gave us all quite a scare,”

“Are you here to save me?” Will felt the throngs of sleep attempting to overtake him once again.

Save me save me save me save me save me

“Yes Will, I’ll keep you safe from those that are attempting to harm you,” God gritted out. A relieved tear slipped from the corner of his eye. Her hand was scalding hot against his clammy skin, but it grounded him enough to make a move.

“He touched me,” Will whispered. At least he thought he had, but by the silence that blanketed the room The Devil must have heard his confession as well.

“Will…” The Devil coughed. His two fingers were frigid while he tucked a sweaty curl behind Will’s ear. The contact made him grip God’s hand.

“Elliot told me so. Told me to run away…horns…” Will tried to explain. Fighting the claws of sleep, he dug his fingernails into his palms until there were indentions. The room let out its held breath with his addition.

“It’s going to be ok now Will. Just rest and eat Hannibal’s soup ok?” Will let go of her hand in surprise. God colluded with the Devil? Perhaps they weren’t that different. Did good and evil ever have a hard line? This philosophical shit had his drugged mind swimming.

His sudden silence and ending of skin contact must have aroused Her suspicion. She flexed her power and released her wings from behind Her back. The feathered wings outstretched, covered in eyes, all unblinking and staring at him. The weight of Her gaze daunted him. Her promise of protection no longer felt holy.

Ever so slightly he scooted toward The Devil. He squinted one eye at Him and watched as The Devil also spread His wings in an act of defiance. They were bony with membranes stretched thin to show all the zigzagging veins. Although His eyes were bloody red at least there were only two of them. Even if they did see more than all of God’s eyes, Will could deal with the gaze of two eyes.

“You serpent, viper brood, how have you escaped being damned to Hell?” Will fell asleep after huffing out those words from the book of Matthew. Unbothered by the drool leaking from the corner of his mouth, he wished he could ask for more soup, even if it was poison.

(Matthew 23:33)

*****

Hannibal watched Will flutter into a conscious state. The time had passed stiffly from Jack's call, to the drive, to the waiting for Will to wake up. It was all so damn mundane.

The doctor was an old colleague of Hannibal's surgeon past. In fact, Lecter had insisted Dr. Donald Sutcliffe consult on Graham, even though he was a neurologist with a packed schedule.

"I've never seen an appendix burst from stress alone," Sutcliffe poured over a medical chart with Lecter.

"The fever had a part to play in it as well it seems," Hannibal clasped his hands behind his back. His knuckles were white as he attempted to hide his fascination.

"A cold, an empathy disorder that leads to a mental breakdown, and a burst appendix walk into a bar…"

Hannibal scoffed at the attempt at a joke. He admitted it was a strange cocktail of comorbid conditions. Hardly three conversations had passed between them, but Hannibal found himself hanging on Will's every action.

"Dr. Lecter you have got to keep me updated on how his condition progresses,"

"Of course. For now I shall return to him before his soup grows cold," Hannibal felt possessiveness tighten his chest. The good doctor would not be providing updates that weren't necessary.

Now Hannibal was facing a much harder challenge.

"Open your mouth," Hannibal pressed the spoon to Will's ajar mouth. The moment the metal met lips Will tightened in resistance. Even in sedation the boy was such a tease.

"It's soup. Good soup I'd say since I made it myself. It will help with your recovery," Hannibal couldn't help monologuing about the soup's medicinal benefits. Will's fog filled mind wouldn't remember the speech but that wouldn't deter Hannibal from bragging about it.

Will lifted his arm and pushed Hannibal's spoon away. Drugs sapped Graham's strength so the resistance didn't even knock the liquid out of the utensil. Lecter felt his lips quirk upward at the corners.

"I wouldn't try to move much if I were you. The sedation hasn't quite worn off yet," Hannibal ran his manicured nails down Will's arm until goosebumps popped up. Temptation tore apart Hannibal's sanity.

Thoughts lazily floated by. Possibilities of keeping Will like this forever. So pliable under the sedation, easy for any mental or physical manipulation. Unable to put up his mental walls or lie or avoid Hannibal. Eventually they wouldn't even need the drugs, Will would completely

rely on Hannibal for everything. Unable to live life without him. Lecter would be Will's very own tumor.

Hannibal cleared his throat to refocus and allowed the thoughts to die in his mind. Although it was a lovely scenario, Will's mind would die in such circumstances, like a flower wilted with too much water. Part of the fun with Will was his insistent barriers and how much fun tearing them down brick by brick was. Will would rely on him eventually, but it would be much more fun if Will walked into the parrot cage himself.

"Elliot told me about you. Devil man…I won't consume your poison any longer," Will squeaked out with a hoarse voice. Hannibal used this opportunity to slide the spoon into Will's mouth.

"Those are brave words but this isn't poison. As I mentioned it's soup of my own creation," Hannibal opened his own mouth to reiterate the importance of his soup and healing, but a slap behind him caught his attention.

He hadn't even noticed Alana and Jack entering the room, much less their heated whisper argument, but he did notice Alana's palm turning red and the most delicious smell of guilt and embarrassment wading off of Jack. Whatever the argument had been pertaining to, it wasn't worth riling Will up.

Hannibal stewed over the rudeness of the situation while rubbing his knuckles over Will's arm. It grounded the man as Will relaxed his grip on the blankets.

Alana's clicking heels caught Will's attention. His eyes dilated when the woman came into view and Hannibal suppressed the jealousy biting at his heels.

"Will I'm so happy you're lucid. You gave us all quite a scare," she leaned over the bed and placed Will's hands in between her own. Jack had called Alana after himself, and it was a victory Hannibal was childishly hanging unto.

"Are you here to save me?"

"Yes Will, I'll keep you safe from those that are attempting to harm you," Alana spit out in the same whisper tone she had used in the argument with Jack.

"Your savior complex is showing," he wanted to say but swallowed down.

"He touched me," Will whispered and threw a suspicious glance in Hannibal's direction.

Hannibal felt his jaw tick at the wording. Alana raised her eyebrows in his direction. He opened his mouth once, closed it, and opened it one more time. Not many things had left Hannibal speechless but Will kept finding ways to do it.

"Will…" Hannibal managed to cough out. Absentmindedly he tucked a curl away from Will's line of sight. The casual touch only made Alana's eyebrows raise further into her hairline.

“Elliot told me so. Told me to run away…horns…” Will pushed out the words. Obviously the recent dose of sedation was beginning to take effect. Hannibal was glad he had suggested it to Sutcliffe.

“It’s going to be ok now Will. Just rest and eat Hannibal’s soup ok?” Alana unfurled Will’s fists. This new habit of self mutilation would no longer go unnoticed from either party. Will’s eyes widened as his pupils shrank under Alana’s motherly stare.

“You serpent, viper brood, how have you escaped being damned to Hell?” Will whimpered. Hannibal preened as Will scooted ever so slightly toward Hannibal’s side before falling back into his medicated sleep.

“Hannibal, what are we going to do about Will?” Alana tucked her hair behind both ears. Hannibal plastered on a smile to placate her.

Really he would like nothing more than for her to leave and allow him to peel Will’s bandages off. It was a sore spot that he hadn’t yet seen the self-inflicted scratches on the man’s forehead. The way Jack had wearily described them— that they were deep and could even scar— gnawed at Hannibal, but he controlled his urge with precision. Though he hoped the wounds left their mark, he didn’t want them infected. He doubted Will’s weakened state could take it.

Good thing delayed gratification was Hannibal’s fortay.

“Will is an adult. We can do nothing but support him in his own decisions,” Hannibal quipped as he placed a hand between Alana’s shoulder blades.

As if Hannibal would ever follow such advice. Of course he would diligently insert himself into Graham’s life with skilled hands and unseen puppet strings. Until Hannibal could work an exact plan for what to do with Will he would lurk in the shadows, constantly watchful for openings like any hunting predator would do. Alana’s voice brought Hannibal from his thoughts.

“Look what his decisions have gotten him so far. Obviously Will is too vulnerable and open for manipulation. I know he is always speaking about his stupid mental walls but they aren’t high enough to keep him safe,” Alana chewed her thumbnail leaning into Hannibal’s palm on her back.

“We’ll be on the lookout for warning signs now. It will be much easier to catch a descent now that we’ve seen what an episode looks like,”

“Or he should quit the job that is destroying his mental health. I mean Hannibal he tried to claw a non existent tumor out of his head,”

Hannibal removed his hand from Alana’s back to smooth the fabric at his midsection. It was a small show of his disapproval at her suggestion without him having to spare the words. She opened her mouth but Hannibal cut her off before she could say anything.

“We’ll see once he awakens. Will is scheduled to be off sedation tomorrow,”

Alana took the hint and nodded, “I do have some patient notes to be going over. As long as Will is ok… I just needed to see it with my own eyes before sleeping tonight,”

“Drive home safely,” Hannibal sat in the chair beside Will’s bed and crossed his ankle to rest on his knee. One of the student’s essays lay on the nightstand that Hannibal was avoiding grading. For some reason he assumed that agreeing to help Jack fill in for Will’s classroom would be a bit more fun. It only worried Hannibal about the FBI’s future prospects.

Alana collected her things and hovered in the doorway. Although Hannibal had to feign any curiosity about her, he knew she wouldn’t leave until she expressed her worries.

“Was there something else you wanted to tell me, Alana?” Hannibal placed his red grading pen down.

“Your relationship with Will, what is it?” Alana blurted. Hannibal smirked and uncrossed his legs to lean forward.

“We know where we stand with each other. Isn’t that all that matters?”

****

Alana tapped her heel waiting for the vending machine to dispense her soda. The small moment allowed her to flick the tear from under her eye. She wanted to be composed in case Will was awake.

Since that jarring phone call that Will was going into surgery hours ago she hadn’t showered and was regretting not changing before rushing over. Trying not to spill anything on the only white suit she possessed was not the extra worry she needed right now. Maybe no one would notice if she roamed the halls with her heels in one hand and her fourth Coke in the other.

She haunted her way toward Will’s room, the bustle of the hospital halls not working to distract her. That was all she’d done since arriving, avoiding his room just like she was avoiding going home to bury that kitten. Her nose wrinkled at the thought of it rotting in the box.

Fear slowed her steps in front of his door. Fear that Will’s battered mind and body would reflect like a mirror. Fear that everytime she looked at him it would reflect how little control she had to protect what she loved. Fear that she’d no longer be able to see Will at all— just a sacrificial lamb made of glass that needed to be covered in bubble wrap.

“Nervous to see him?” Jack cleared his throat behind her. Somehow she managed to not scream in surprise, even having the composure to throw the man a death stare.

“You promised Jack. You promised me you’d protect him. Not push him off a goddamn ledge,” her voice quivered. As she lightly touched her cross necklace she sent a prayer to above for taking the Lord’s name in vain. The sin had felt warranted.

“Not giving me a moment of peace ah?” Jack let his shoulders slump. She ignored his grab for pity and opened the door.

Hannibal was already speaking lowly to a half conscious Will when she entered through the door. His back was to her so she remained silent, not wanting to ruin the apparent tender moment between the two. When had those two gotten so close anyways…

“You have to know I didn’t mean for it to be like this Alana. I had no idea he wasn’t physically feeling well. Not to this extent,”

“So you knew he was breaking down mentally? That’s what you’re saying to try and make me feel better?”

“I—“

“It doesn’t matter what I feel like. You owe Will an apology, not me,”

“I’ll planned to give him one as soon as he is back in the field with me,”

Alana scoffed, “Back in his classroom you mean?”

“I won’t apologize for saving innocent lives,”

One of the things Alana prided herself most on was her ability to have a chilled demeanor. It made her an excellent listener and psychologist. Even she was surprised when she slapped Jack in anger.

“Don’t pass your mistakes to the public. Don’t try and pass your guilt to someone’s shoulders. I think you should just leave Jack,” Alana spat. Her hand vibrated with the leftover heat, like the ground after lightning struck.

Hannibal cleared his throat. Alana spun around to see Will gripping the blanket and eyes blown. Guilt squeezed her heart at accidentally scaring Will while he was vulnerable.

“Will I’m so happy you’re lucid. You gave us all quite a scare,” she leaned over the bed and placed Will’s hands in between her own. Tactically she ignored Hannibal’s skinship with Will as he grazed his knuckles over Will’s arm. It reminded Alana of someone petting their beloved pet.

“Are you here to save me?” Will said with glassy eyes.

“Yes Will, I’ll keep you safe from those that are attempting to harm you,” Alana fired at Jack. She was satisfied to hear the door closing behind her, glad Jack got the hint he was an unwanted presence.

“He touched me,” Will side eyed Hannibal. Alana felt her eyebrows shoot toward God. She couldn’t even find the organization to open her mouth as a million thoughts poured into her mind.

“Will…” Hannibal coughed. Never had Alana seen Hannibal so frazzled. Never had she seen him so touchy over anyone. When has he ever tucked someone’s hair behind their ear? Usually he avoided skinship at all cost. She attempted connecting the dots mentally, but Will broke the silence.

“Elliot told me so. Told me to run away…horns…” Alana let out a sigh in relief at the clarification. So Will was still being a bit delusional in his wording because of the prolonged sedation.

“It’s going to be ok now Will. Just rest and eat Hannibal’s soup ok?”

Then Will scooted slightly toward his left side where Hannibal towered over him. He mumbled something only Hannibal could hear then closed his eyes and breathed evenly. Whatever he said had put a devil’s grin on the doctor’s face. Alana felt like she was intruding on the scene but swallowed that feeling. Will had been her friend for much longer than Lecter. She had to ask again, when had the two gotten so damn chummy?

“Hannibal, what are we going to do about Will?” Alana tucked her hair behind both ears. Years ago she had attempted at overcoming this nervous tick, but it resurfaced every so often to her chagrin . The question hung in the air as Hannibal kept his eye trained on the sleeping Will.

“Will is an adult. We can do nothing but support him in his own decisions,” Slyly Hannibal quipped as he glided toward her. Sometimes he resembled a predator so much that she would flinch on reflex, like one would if they found a snake in the bush they were pruning. He placed a hand between Alana’s shoulder blades. Even with his predator gait Alana knew that he was a generous and kind person deep down, so his touch relaxed her.

“Look what his decisions have gotten him so far,” Alana chewed her thumbnail. Another quirk she couldn’t outgrow. “Obviously Will is too vulnerable and open for manipulation. I know he is always speaking about his stupid mental walls but they aren’t high enough to keep him safe,” She leaned into Hannibal’s touch, chasing the comfort of human warmth (even though his hand was biting cold).

“We’ll be on the lookout for warning signs now. It will be much easier to catch a descent now that we’ve seen what an episode looks like,” Hannibal smiled. He still watched Will like a child eyeing an indulgent dessert. Alana shivered and hugged her arms.

“Or he should quit the job that is destroying his mental health. I mean Hannibal he tried to claw a non existent tumor out of his head,” She massaged her temples. The bright hospital lights and smell of cleaner did nothing for her exhaustion headache.

Hannibal removed his hand from Alana’s back and smoothed the fabric at his midsection. For a reason Alana couldn’t place the withdraw of comfort felt calculated. It made her open her mouth to explain herself, even though she found no fault in her thinking (and couldn’t think of a reason Hannibal would be against it). Before she could speak Hannibal gave her an out.

“We’ll see once he awakens. Will is scheduled to be off sedation tomorrow,” Hannibal finally ripped his gaze away from Will to glance at Alana. And then he glanced at the door.

Alana wasn’t an idiot. She begrudgingly took the hint and nodded, “I do have some patient notes to be going over. As long as Will is ok… I just needed to see it with my own eyes before sleeping tonight,”

“Drive home safely,” Hannibal sat in the chair beside Will’s bed and crossed his ankle to rest on his knee. She had been dismissed as if Hannibal was Will’s doctor. For once Lecter’s command of conversation irked her to no end.

Alana gripped her handbag. Frustrated would be an understatement. She felt like understanding was right out of reach, like she was only three pieces away from a complete puzzle, but the three were never in the box to begin with.

“Was there something else you wanted to tell me, Alana?” Hannibal placed his red grading pen down. She hadn’t realized she’d been staring a hole in Hannibal’s head but she recovered quickly.

“Your relationship with Will, what is it?” the question had taken all of her courage to cough out. For some reason the whole thing felt utterly wrong. As if she were watching a nature documentary and was desperately trying to warn a zebra that a hyena was stalking right behind it.

“We know where we stand with each other. Isn’t that all that matters?” Hannibal smiled that hyena smile. Alana felt like a zebra watching her friend get devoured.

She went home and buried the kitten.

Chapter End Notes

I tried something a little different with the three perspectives this chapter. I hope it turned out ok. If you didn’t get it here is a quick synopsis of what happened

Will had a mental breakdown and his appendix burst. He imagines a devil (Hannibal) vs god
(Alana) battle for him and finds more comfort in Hannibal. Hannibal is excited Will is in this state because it’s interesting but is ready for his recovery because he misses Will’s wit. Alana is worried that Hannibal and Will’s relationship is inappropriate but has nothing to back it up with so she can’t correct either of them. She slaps Jack.

Alana wants Will to quit. Hannibal wants Will to get worse so he can get “better”. I guess we’ll see what Will does next week…

Forbidden Fruit

Chapter Summary

> "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,"
>
> -The Serphant in Genesis 3:5
>
> "I am who I have always been; the scales have fallen away from my eyes"
>
> —Will Graham episode 12 of season 1

Chapter Notes

> Free Palestine Congo Sudan
>
> This came to me in a dream so I shot up at 3 am bleary eyed and wrote it and posted it so sorry for any typos. a bit of just a self indulgent chapter. It's prose poetry and will have no major plot points so feel free to skip if it's not your thing. But it does give insight into "my" Hannibal. Might delete later

See the end of the chapter for more notes

> Surviving is the eighth deadly sign. I found out that in the snow where the wind bites like a dog and blood burns so scalding it staines me.
>
> I still wake up at night to scrub them. Under the nails and between the fingers and on the top and on the palm and don't look in the mirror and under the nails and between the fingers because we don't look in the mirror when there is blood on our hands. Is that why I became a surgeon? To have an excuse to wash blood off my hands every morning, every night, every evening, every first light?
>
> Does it even matter?

The serpent tempted me. Stuck it's forked tongue between my teeth until I craved sin too. So I swallowed the damned creature. God cursed it to crawl on the ground, then what punishment have I bestowed? Digestion by the flesh it corrupted.

It's still in there under my skin and tries to peek out of every pore and every day I gorge myself on it again until it's damned back to the very hell I created for it

Gluttony is appetite.

Not just of the stomach

The sin of yearning

Yearning to devour everything in my sights.

I can practically count my ribs protruding

No matter how much I eat

There. Is. No. Satisfaction

No satiation no settlement

It continues to wither and writhe

I continue to consume

This game is getting monotonous

Until

The curly headed man on the hospital bed.

What a temptation those fruits of the neck are

God's punishment

Sadistic reminders

Bobbes in his throat with each swallow and I've never

Ever ever never

Wanted to crack a throat open so badly. To drink from a flowing fountain of the sweetest forgiveness.

Every swallow I think of salvation and when he'll deliver it to me. Mana of the heavens, fruits of hell

Now I see why the serpent damned it all

This hole I can't fill

No matter what I eat

I just haven't tried the right dish

When that man and his flesh of Adam

dissolves on my tongue

I know that it will grant atonement

(Ever since that snowy landscape and loss gripped me I've been a venomous beast slithering on forsaken land and tempting the travelers just to spite the divine that allowed such sins to pass upon my shoulders)

Now I see why the serpent

(me it's always been me)

Damned it all

This hole I can't fill

An aching reminder

A lake of fire

(Loneliness. Never ending darkness)

Adam's flesh soothes it. The potential to soothe, I see the Expiation in his eyes.

My divine. My God.

He smells like her. Like my sister (I miss my sister)

They smell like

They love me

I've

Consumed

Everything

Before salvation can rear its putrid head,

I'm horrified at the potential

I'll bite the hand that feeds

(My own)

And him, just like that girl in the snow and that blood

(What did she look like? Was she scared?)

(I can't recall now)

(The serpent melted those memories when I ate it)

(I don't want to recall it)

My human suit is bursting at the seam lines, the stitches are ripping, my skin is tight, my stomach bloated but I'm still eating

I'm

Consuming

Everything

But I'm still so fucking hungry

Chapter End Notes

I really miss writing prose poetry in class. Does anyone else just go crazy for religious imagery and the loyal - dog - “I’m not a violent dog, I don’t know why I bite “ - motif? Or am I just an angry lesbian who grew up in the shadow of an altar

Lazarus

Chapter Summary

> Will wakes up. There is an elk in a hospital. Nothing goes wrong

Chapter Notes

> I Can't believe we're at 20,000 words. And it's hardly the first arc. I told my mom this bachelors in English wouldn't go to waste
>
> Also while writing this I came across DIVINE by Korn and lowkey that song is so Hannibal coded I ate it up

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"My shift big man," Beverly shook Hannibal awake "Go grab yourself something to eat. Or make something. I don't know what rich mofos do,"

Hannibal had awoken as soon as Beverly walked through the door, he just hadn't wanted to change shifts. Will was due to wake up any moment and he wanted to be the one Will woke up to.

Hannibal sighed. He couldn't get everything he wanted.

"I bid you ado Miss Kantz. Please do contact me if our dear friend awakens,"

Beverly watched Hannibal depart, and only when his distinct gait could no longer be heard did she say,

"I guess I should have expected someone with such a tight ass to be a real tight ass. You know he doesn't even want the hospital staff feeding you?" She leaned down toward Will's

ear “Be honest he’s your sugar daddy isn’t he?”

Will didn’t budge. Beverly placed her head on his chest. Physical contact was a no no for Will on normal occasions so when he was in suspended state she soaked it up. The last time she’d received a hug from the man was when they both got plastered after Beverly’s last breakup. Will had been inclined to heartbreak because her ex-girlfriend had been especially skilled at fly fishing. Losing those skillful fingers was exactly why Beverly had gotten so drunk that she woke up in Will’s bathtub.

They had simultaneously agreed to steer clear of beautiful fishing butches for awhile. And whatever the grocery store had laced their cheap box wine with.

Beverly listened to the strong thumping of her best friend’s heartbeat.

He is alive. He didn’t die. He is alive. He didn’t die

She kept repeating those words until the rhythm put her to sleep. A sleep with dreams of the worst thing Will worrying about was low bait.

***

Will’s eyes flew open. Something was holding him down, something was restraining him. He had to escape. *Escape escape escape.* Ran through his mind on loop until the restraint snored.

Beverly drooled on his chest, tickling his arm hairs with each breath. His head flopped back on the pillow. An exasperated sigh left his cracked lips but his hand betrayed his true feelings as they ran through her hair. She was the only one that physical contact could be peaceful with . Though he’d never tell her that lest she attach to his hip.

Mind fog dissipated moment by moment as he attempted to piece the past events together. He felt rough gauze on his head and abdomen, machines beeped all around, bleach infested his

nostrils.

Will cursed. He hated hospitals.

The last time he'd been at a hospital was when Beverly's ex boyfriend thought he'd win a fight against Carter, Beverly's girlfriend at the time. As if Carter didn't have the meanest left hook Will had ever seen. Trying to save that idiot's ass had gotten him 4 stitches and lost him the best fishing buddy he'd ever had.

For the briefest amount of time Will felt peaceful, despite the hospital atmosphere. The pressure felt good on his chest, caving under the reassurance of a friend's weight, with no memories of the pain inflicted on him. Then his forehead itched. And his stomach hurt. And the machines were blaring and the lights were getting brighter and the bed was uncomfortable and the blanket was itching and

And then the door opened.

Will's eyes widened as antlers walked in before The Devil could. Unconsciously his heart clenched along with his eyes. No no no no no no no. He was awake now. He was awake now. Everything was real—

"Will, I must ask you to stop pinching yourself so hard,"

Will opened his eyes.

"You avoid me even in your sleep William," Hannibal raised his brows, "you woke up the moment I left,"

"Sorry," Will croaked even though there wasn't anything he felt sorry for. Hannibal had that effect on people. Will's heart remained squeezed in panic.

“Nothing to apologize for. Just an observation,” Hannibal glanced as Will’s hand returned to Beverly’s hair. Just for spite he rubbed her hair in a more noticeable manner than before. To Will’s relief Beverly didn’t stir.

Will could tell Hannibal was surprised at the contact. That glance had felt utterly seeped in jealousy. Not that Will understood why, did the guy really expect him to be this touchy when they’d practically just met? He’d rather bite Hannibal’s hand off than find comfort in his touch. Somehow it felt like Hannibal really wouldn’t mind that.

***

Hannibal made a mental adjustment. Beverly Kantz was off limits. No matter how jealous he got, no matter how much she snooped around. If Will ever found out he killed Beverly there would be no salvaging any relationship, much less fostering codependency. He could see a possessive glint in Will’s gaze that would not be trifled with. Like a brother eyeing his little sister’s prom date. Hannibal refrained from rolling his eyes.

Hannibal was quite familiar with possessiveness and knew the depths of it hidden under Will’s lackadaisical petting. Like an owner holding its mutt before the big dog show, the dog is ever so loyal and excited to serve, sleeping on its owner’s chest.

While Hannibal did want to see Will go completely full throttle feral, life would be a bit boring if he had to kill the man out of self defense. Or Hannibal would be dead. Not the best of outcomes. Hannibal would rather they take any disagreements out in the sheets, not the streets as Beverly had suggested.

Besides, he enjoyed the woman’s sharp tongue. She somehow could calm down and escalate any situation she was in with any group of people. If he wasn’t the master of social politics he might even be jealous at her ability to command interactions.

He could use her like scissors to open an exciting new toy. The thought nearly brought a smile to his lips.

“Did anyone speak with Mrs. Emma yet?” Will began braiding Beverly’s hair so his fingers would stop itching to pick his own skin off the bones.

“Jack advised he is finishing up that case now. A new killer has surfaced in the short time of your unconsciousness. They made an entire totem pole of victims by the sea. Uncle Jack has his hands full at the moment without his star Savior on the field,” Hannibal began unpacking a lunch box he’d stored in the room for the event of Will’s awakening. The crack of opening Tupperware made a slumped Beverly stir.

Will removed his fingers from her hair and gazed out the window. Beverly blinked one eye at a time like a cartoonish frog. Hannibal thought if he had a heart it would think the scene endearing.

“Will I told you if you braid my hair to do a fishtail braid, not a fisherman’s knot… I’m never getting these knots out now,”

Heat creeped up into Will’s ear. His acts of affection were out in the open, he might as well be an ant under a magnifying glass.

“Force of habit,” Will coughed out.

“Aww Dr. Lecter, save me from this uncultured barbarian,” Beverly said but flopped onto Will’s legs anyways. She was trying to enjoy the physical contact as long as Will let her.

Hannibal stirred the food in the Tupperware to make sure it was still warm. Unfortunately it was a rare vegetarian dish from his kitchen, but with no appendix and recent stress of surgery Will needed the fiber more than Hannibal needed niche satisfaction.

“Damn that smells good,” Beverly sat up from Will’s legs. All part of the plan.

“It’s a broth with plenty of vegetables. Our Will needs to be gentle on his digestive system,” Hannibal passed the container to Will. Even though Hannibal wanted to feed it to the

deliciously vulnerable man, the action might send Will into another stress induced coma.

Instead he busied his hands by working the loops out of Beverly's hair. Unlike Will, she hardly flinched at the sudden physical contact.

"Did you bring the totem pole photos?" Will picked at his nails. Beverly crossed her arms.

"We're not talking to you until I see some broth and beans in that mouth," she said. Hannibal got one knot out. He was surprised by how expertly they were woven. Too many ideas with that thought.

Will twisted his mouth into an odd shape but began shoveling the food in. After the first three bites he stopped and the tension melted.

"Holy fuck is there *crack* sprinkled in this? I don't even like carrots but this is…" the food in his mouth stopped him from completing the sentence. Another knot untied.

"You lucky dog! I'm jealous. I got egg salad from the vending machine," Beverly pouted.

"As if I could forget you Miss Kantz," Hannibal slid to the side table and pulled out a second Tupperware. His calculations paid off.

"You're *kidding,* " Beverly popped the lid open like a kid on Christmas. Another knot unwoven. She smelled the contents and sighed happily. Another knot unwoven. She took a huge bite. Another knot unwoven.

A ghost of a smile fell on Will's face. Hannibal's assumption that the sick man would be too uncomfortable eating without Beverly having her own portion had been correct. They were closer than he first realized.

“Good god I think even if you cooked my own leg over a fire pit I’d eat it,” Beverly drank the broth. Hannibal’s hands didn’t hesitate, his breathing didn’t change, no unconscious body language. No tells. Another knot unwoven.

“Beverly,” Will chided between bites.

“Miss Kantz I do believe you hold me in too high of esteem,” Hannibal began tying her hair into a fishtail braid. Beverly rolled her eyes.

“Don’t act like you don’t eat up praise you glutton,”

“Show off,” Will rolled his eyes. “Ok, I’ve finished the meal. Got those pictures?”

“Oh no you don’t! You’re not even thinking about work until you’re at least out of the hospital,” Beverly stamped her foot. Hannibal held in his sigh. He really had been excited for Will to see the pictures, but he felt that to go against Beverly Kantz was to go against a tsunami.

“Can I at least get this gauze off?” Will was already picking at the white space along his forehead. Now seeing the self inflicted damage to Will’s forehead was worth fighting a tsunami. Hannibal tightened the braid before Beverly could open her mouth.

“Complete,” Hannibal waved his hands. Beverly squealed in her phone camera. He continued

“I can assist you in changing your bandages Will, but they will need to stay on a couple of more days to accommodate the healing of the incision,”

“You’re not a doctor here anymore. Call a nurse to help me,” Will turned toward the window and crossed his arms. Hannibal felt his jaw tick. Ah, the things he was gonna do to this man.

“No need. I’ll help you instead,” Beverly yanked Will’s head back by the hair and poked his forehead “Now where is the start of the gauze…”

“Ok ok ok *Dr Lecter* please help change my bandages before *Beverly rips my hair out because she has proven her point*,” Will reached out toward Hannibal and beckoned him closer with pleading eyes. Ah, the *things* he was gonna do to this man.

***

Desperately, and unsuccessfully, Will tried to keep his pout in check as Lecter unraveled the gauze.

The touch was professional but any physical contact felt burning against such tender flesh. Especially to one such as Will, who constantly avoided touch at all times. He couldn’t be sure, since Will couldn’t see Hannibal, but it nearly felt like the doctor’s hands were shaking. Maybe Lecter wasn’t as good at physical contact as he pretended to be.

Or the good doctor was way too excited to get his fingers on Will’s head. The thought made him shiver.

“The doctor said it wouldn’t scar… noticeably,” Beverly said in an attempt to reprieve the perceived worry. Will said nothing as he placed his hand in the air for the mirror. The potential scarring held no anxiety for him. People looked at him like he was a freak whether he had outward scars or not.

The marks were dark red and puffy, obviously in the throngs of healing, and there was even a stitch or two dotting his forehead. Intricate curves weaved across from temple to temple.

“I look like a map of interstates,” Will said the same time Hannibal murmured something about Christ’s crown of thorns. Will threw him a weirded out side eye as Hannibal’s eyes practically sparkled in awe. Will, by some miracle, kept any comments to himself.

“I think it’ll give you a rugged look, attract some ladies,” Beverly shot finger guns. Hannibal and Will’s dissatisfied expressions caused her to shrug and add “or attract some rugged men,”

With all the grace of a bulldozer Will coughed into his fist. Hannibal smirked but didn't pick at the obvious mental scab. Instead he said,

"The good nurses have informed me that you should be leaving here by tomorrow. Although the incision takes 2-4 weeks to make a full recovery from, at least it can be done inside of your own home,"

Will nodded in acknowledgment but said nothing. In truth he was nervous to go home.

He was nervous to be alone, nothing but his own mind and disfigured reflection to keep him company. As if that had ever led him to a good outcome.

"Of course you'll be needing assistance with any mobility for a while," Hannibal said. God could the fucker read minds?

"Don't worry, I've already called first dibs. I got enough cookie dough and frozen pizzas for us to last the rest of winter with," Beverly winked. Hannibal squeezed his lips into a tight line.

"Miss Kantz, I'll be happy to cook for all three of us…"

"Dr. Lecter please, I'm nothing if not self sufficient. I couldn't possibly ask you to cook us three meals per day for weeks on end," Beverly held her palm to her neck as if offended. Will saw the plot she was attempting and worked hard to stifle a laugh.

"Miss Kantz…"

"No no Doctor, I know you're quite busy. Don't worry I also have box Mac and cheese and a Chinese take out restaurant on speed dial. Will's nutrition is assured. I eat it every night and

feel great!" Beverly patted Will's shoulder. He did his best to nod along but felt laughter about to tumble out.

"Every night…"

Honest to god Hannibal's eye *twitched.* Beverly pinched Will ever so slightly. He took his cue.

"Unless you simply insisted. Beverly and I wouldn't wanna infringe on your schedule or portion sizing. That would be so rude of us," Will bit the inside of his cheek to keep a serious expression. Too quickly Hannibal was letting out a relieved breath.

"It would be no infringement at all. I really do insist you allow me the simple pleasure of cooking for you both,"

Beverly and Will made electrified eye contact. Delicious food 3 times a day for the coming weeks, mission successful.

***

Hannibal massaged his temples once hidden away in his Bentley.

Maybe Beverly wasn't as good for Will as he once imagined.

He recalled their hardly contained excitement at the prospect of *raw cookie dough* . Oh the vulgarity.

Possible courses flipped through his mind as he drove back home. He ignored the warmth that had bloomed in his chest observing the pair.

Hope was never something Hannibal harbored, not unless he also wanted to harbor disappointment, but he found it digging in his heart garden anyways. Friends or lovers were never something he acknowledged wanting, knowing they could never accept him for the monster they perceived him to be.

Will was changing that. His mind wandered, if Will could understand him, accept him, be more than a fun toy of the week, would his understanding bring connection from others? Would his empathy bleed into Hannibal if he consumed every part of Will, mind, body, soul?

What is connection if not being consumed?

***

Instead of his usual jolting to an upright position, Will woke up by opening his eyes slowly. This was his first clue that he hadn't actually awakened at all.

The second indicator was that a massive, jet black elk stood in the middle of his hospital room. Its warm breath huffed the sleep from Will's eyes, as if annoyed it had taken the man too long to awaken.

Will sat upright as the animal exited his room, its hooves echoing hauntingly down the empty hallway, an oddity for a bustling hospital. Thankfully it drowned out the methodical beeping of machines that Will was beginning to loathe.

It reentered the room, huffed and stamped its feet, then exited once more. After the third time this ritual repeated, Will realized the creature wanted him to follow it. Since he had nothing to lose, especially in a dream, Will began unstrapping himself from the hospital's grip.

His third indicator this was a dream was the absence of pain. As he slid the IV from the crook of his elbow a dollop of blood bloomed. Will ignored it and began after the creature with a relaxed pace.

The hospital was silent as a tomb. Lights above flickered wearily with doors opening and shutting by themselves. An empty wheelchair rolled beside him and Will stopped to watch it

go to the elevator. Once again, the doors open and shut, as if the hallway was alive with patients and staff.

Will chuckled at the lack of originality his own mind had provided. Wasn't a silent, haunted hospital with a creature in it sort of… cliche?

Abruptly the elk turned to the right and quickened its pace. So Will sighed and did the same, much too curious what his subconscious was trying to tell him, to even notice his abdomen had a growing heat to it.

They weaved the hallways in this ever quickening pace. Occasionally Will would stop and stare at an oddity. Sometimes the oddity stared back. He could have sworn on the receptionist desk papers slid toward him to sign. they had all his correct information on them, but Will thought you couldn't read in dreams. He'd have to read on it when he woke up.

Will wondered when he'd awaken. He wondered if he'd be coated in sweat, or worse, have someone staring down at him with eyes of pity.

The elk bellowed to snap Will's attention to it. Its hulking form stood in front of the hospital doors leading to the outside. They slid open and shut continuously with the elk's weight as it beckoned once again. The animal urged Will to follow as it trotted from the hospital.

Will felt sweat prickle the small of his back. His skin was scattered in gooseflesh and radiated with a far off heat. Everything felt distant, as if he could see a fire, but was not close enough to feel its warmth.

Now determined more than ever to catch the elk, Will trotted outside as well. For some reason the hospital doors felt like the maw of an animal, opening and closing to allow him to enter the belly of a beast.

Snow was falling afresh on the ground. Will marveled at the lack of footprints he and the elk were leaving.

Impatient, the elk bellowed again, quite the distance away now. Will didn't know why, but he could tell it was urging him to escape, from what he didn't know. The elk had stopped a ways away, unmoving it continued to scream.

Again textile sensations felt far away, as if they were happening to someone else. Will felt cold asphalt against his bare feet like one might taste the remnant of pickles taken off a burger, it was like an afterthought happening to someone else.

"Will?"

Will froze. The elk now directly in front of him he saw now why it had been waiting. Its leg was caught in the teeth of a bear trap. It did not bleed, yet it's glassy eyes reflected Will and a crouched, frothing wolf behind him. The wolf was skinny, starving, every rib protruding worse than its own teeth.

"Will, what are you doing out of your room in the cold? Can you hear me?"

Will turned ever so slowly to gaze upon Hannibal stalking toward him. The man held a lunchbox that no doubt had steaming hot, homemade food in it. He wore a ridiculous purple suit.

"Will, what are you doing out here? I really don't enjoy repeating myself," Hannibal extended a hand and Will could see now, the claws that extended from it. So Will did what any trapped animal would think to do.

He bit into the meat of Hannibal's palm, right below the thumb, until he tasted blood in his mouth. Hannibal choked a surprised noise in his throat but surprisingly did not flinch or try to take his hand from between Will's teeth.

That was his first indicator that Will was not dreaming. Metallic blood brought a stark clarity to his muddled mind. Will smiled when Hannibal blood snaked from between his lips to drip down his chin.

“I’m not dreaming am I?” Will coughed. Hot, sticky pain began to uncurl in his gut and the cold stung his feet. Yet the elk still stamped its feet and sang its song behind him. Will took a step back only for Hannibal to clutch his bicep.

“You’re awake Will. Let’s get you back to your room before you catch a cold or infection,” Hannibal said. The blood of his bitten palm soaked into Will’s hospital gown. Warmth brought a startling awareness to the pain on his body so Will tried to yank his arm out of Hannibal’s hold.

Dread seeped from the inclosed grip as Will failed to wiggle out of it. Setting sunrays framed his curls in light as he peered at Hannibal’s calculating expression. As if Will was a disagreeable horse Hannibal was attempting to break and saddle.

The energy that adrenaline had propped Will’s exhausted body up with for this little excursion was now dying away. For better or worse he was caught in the bear trap, escape would have to wait until another opportunity arose. Will had no doubt the elk would appear to him again when he most needed it.

“See?” Will pointed toward the elk, now laying upon the ground in a tired defeat. He looked back at Hannibal with a determined expectation. If anyone would see it, it would be Hannibal.

“What do you see Will?” Hannibal scrunched his brows. Lecter still hadn’t released Will’s bicep from his way-too-strong-for-a-normal-therapist grip. The realization of what the elk was trying to warn him of made Will’s skin crawl.

Will motioned for Hannibal to lean toward him. Through a scoff the man bent down to placate Will, but all Will could squeeze out was laughter. His breath warmed the doctor’s ear and would have made a lesser man blush.

“Of course you can’t see the elk, you’re a wolf,” Will tapped the top of Hannibal’s warmer, no doubt holding a plethora of meat laden dishes.

Will placed his forehead on Hannibal's shoulder. Pain was burning his new incision, the cold freezing his exposed body, exhaustion fried all his nerve endings. Captivity was preferable over dying in the wild, at least for tonight.

"Ready to go inside now?" Hannibal said, placing a cool hand on the back of Will's neck.

"Ready for you to let go of my arm," Will smiled. Once more he turned to the elk and waved his goodbyes. The elk shook its head with monstrous antlers, voicing its disappointment, and galloped into the nearby trees. Now it was Will's turn to furrow his brows.

It hadn't been trapped at all. The elk had been able to get away whenever it wanted.

"What a peculiar beast," Will sighed

"Peculiar indeed," Hannibal said as he supported Will by the elbow.

***

Hannibal watched Will lightly snore in the unflattering hospital lights. Shadows casted his features in ghostly angles and edges. He cracked his neck to get the image of a corpse out of his mind.

"So go through this with me again," Jack rubbed his eyes. "Will was outside in the parking lot in nothing but a hospital gown and oh yeah claimed to see *an elk,* "

"Yes that is what I've said multiple times," Hannibal tapped his fingers across Will's knuckles, enjoying how the movement made the man flinch in his sleep. Jack let out a long sigh.

"How did he even get out there without anyone stopping him?"

“I spoke with the nurses and they advised that Will was talking coherently. He even advised them that he was being discharged and I was picking him up. Signed the papers with reception,” Hannibal lifted papers to Jack’s awaiting hands. The signature was sloppy and hardly legible, but it was there.

Hannibal held a smirk back. Will’s subconscious always tempted the psychiatrist to crack the skull and see it for himself. It tempted the chef in Hannibal to see how it tastes in a wine reduction.

“I thought Will was only having delusions because of his fever?” Alana gnawed her nail.

“It appears the ordeal has had a lingering effect on his psyche. That is precisely why I suggested he have a chaperone at all times,”

“And I suppose you were going to volunteer for most of the shifts,” Alana bit out. Hannibal would have to work on her overactive motherly instincts toward Will.

“He was being discharged tomorrow, why would he be so desperate to leave immediately?” Jack interrupted Alana and Hannibal’s silent stare down.

“Why don’t you ask him when he awakens? He is still a grown man, even if he does need, as I'm sure Will would say, a ‘babysitter’,” Hannibal said.

“You need to give him longer off work Jack. And I don’t mean back in his classroom off work, I mean at home resting and not getting any calls or messages from anyone off work,” Alana crossed her arms.

Hannibal agreed outwardly, inwardly he was a selfish, narcissistic creature. There wasn’t a moment he didn’t want Will investigating The Chesapeake Ripper, not a moment the man’s psyche wasn’t flooded with tableaus. He wanted to see how far this young man could be pushed and come back whole.

“I’ll see what I can do,” Jack said in a defeated tone.

Hannibal grazed Will’s knuckles once more. That simply won’t do.

It was time to give Freddie Lounds something to write about.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry this chapter is a bit delayed. No matter how much I wrote it and rewrote it I couldn’t really like it. So I’m just putting it out there so we can move on!
I don’t think it helps that everyday I fight a losing battle to not write a 1 million word lesbian werewolf Hannigram fanfiction.

Merry Christmas

Chapter Summary

The gang “enjoys” Christmas Day
Nothing goes wrong

Chapter Notes

Ah… sorry for it being so short and late… but at least I haven’t yet abandoned thee…

Also a goal this year is to start writing a book of my own and reading a book a month. I just started an Instagram for it —> pink.chapstick

Follow if you want and if you don’t I hope you enjoy the fic anyways <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“So what were you waiting for? Were you gonna tell me before or after we had to discuss funeral plans?” Jack ground his teeth. Much more and he’d ground his molars into nubs.

“Really Jack? On Christmas?” Bella picked at the wrapping on the present in her lap. There had been no tree this year, and despite agreeing not to get anything for each other, they both sat with a present in their laps. The gift was far lighter than their conversation.

“It’s the only time you’re willing to talk to me,” Jack ripped his present apart. It was a framed photo of them in Italy with an intricate frame and message written on the back. He swallowed at the sight of it and decided to read the message later. Alone.

“Because you think you have to fix *everything* . You can’t fix my wandering cells,” Bella chuckled without humor. After peeling away the wrapping and setting it aside, she gazed at her gift. It was a soft blanket with their initials and a small heart embroidered into it. Atop it sat a card with a message scrawled across it. She saw the words *sorry for* and immediately closed the card. She would read the message later. Alone.

Jack leaned toward her and ran a finger lightly down her features. Bella laughed, this time with humor, and asked, “what are you doing now?”

“Memorizing you. Appreciating you. Loving you the only way I know how,” Jack pressed a light kiss between her brows to ease the worry line there. Bella blinked tears away.

“You’ve always done all those things for me,”

“Then why can’t *I fix this?* ”

Bella cradled the side of his face and looked into Jack’s eyes. There she saw ghosts of so many victims, so many worries and fears, so much responsibility. Jack never took any easy route. She brushed his lips with her own, they were both so chapped.

“It’s not yours to fix. Or mine. Just our burdens to bear,” she placed her forehead on his. Took in the scent of him “let’s promise that if I make it—“

“When, my Bella, when you make it,” Jack said. She smiled.

“When I make it, that we will look back at this Christmas and laugh. We’ll laugh that we spent the whole time writing messages and crying and looking into each other’s eyes. We’ll laugh until we cry,”

“I promise,” Jack kisses the inside of her wrist “I promise,”

They read their messages together.

***

Will pressed his forehead to the cold car window and watched the scenery fly by.

“Merry Christmas,” Beverly said behind the wheel.

“Huh?”

“It’s Christmas Will,”

“Oh…sorry you have to drive me home,” Will rubbed the back of his neck. Beverly snorted.

“You saved me going home and seeing my parents. Best Christmas ever considering I don’t have to tell them I don’t have a husband. Again,” she rolled her eyes. Will chuckled then frowned slightly .

“Do I seriously have to be supervised like this? I mean that whole hallucinating thing seems like a one and done thing,” Will looked in the rear view mirror where Hannibal and Alana followed behind with Will’s car. It was so embarrassing having anyone see him like this, much less the two people he respected most and one man he thought was hot (and creepy) as hell.

“That’s what the doctor said,”

“Like my *doctor* doctor or Dr. Lecter?” Will says dryly. Beverly opened her mouth but couldn’t speak before Will shouted, “ *Stop the car!”*

“ *Will what the fuck!”* Beverly slammed on the breaks as Will opened the door before the car even slowed down. She sighed in relief that Hannibal was a reliable driver and didn’t slam into them after the sudden deescalation. Hannibal materialized beside Beverly as they watched Will shuffle through the snow while speaking softly.

“Is he hallucinating?” Hannibal said. Beverly didn’t like the hint of a laugh she detected in that question so she just shrugged. Will ignored their worried stares as he sprinted through the

snow.

“We need to go after him!” Alana began to chase after Will, but Hannibal laid a firm hand on her shoulder.

“I can’t ask a lady to trudge through the snow. I will seek Will and make sure he is not in any danger,” Hannibal smoothed the wrinkles from his midsection and left the two women and three cars to chase after Will and his impulsiveness.

“Come here little guy,” Will held a hand out. He licked his lips at the fear that he could be hallucinating again. The tension in his shoulders melted as a warm tongue tentatively licked his open palm. The dog was shivering with matted fur, but its eyes were clear and wary of the sudden kindness. Will smiled as he took some jerky from his pocket and offered it. The dog —Winston, Will decided— wolfed it down and inched closer.

Will began luring it back toward the vehicle on his knees, uttering soft reassurances, until he knocked into long legs. He turned and looked up to see Hannibal gazing down at him, but something in his gaze made Will want to strike out at him. Like a snake watching a hawk circle.

“I’m glad to see you aren’t hallucinating, but should you be running through the snow in your condition?”

The dog plastered itself under Will’s chest and sat its ears against its own head. It whined softly as Hannibal tilted his head at the pair.

“I don’t see why that’s any concern of yours Dr. Lecter,” Will rubbed the tension from Winston’s nervous frame. Hannibal kept his neutral expression.

“Back to using my formal title already? I simply think of you as a friend Will, and I care about the well-being of my friends,”

Will stood and wiped the snow from his pants. He avoided thinking about how he hadn't heard Hannibal following him. He blamed it on the snow. Winston stayed glued to Will's legs but staring intently at Hannibal.

"I've done nothing to prove myself interesting enough to be your friend,"

"Oh you have done enough and more," Hannibal retorted. "They say dogs are unique judges of character," Hannibal said before Will could ask for him to elaborate on his first statement. Hannibal reached his hand out and after the mutt sniffed his hand and circled Will one more time, Hannibal began walking back to the cars. Silently Will followed behind him, and Winston behind Will.

For some reason, Will felt that something just happened. Some clue, some unspoken rule, some metaphor or foreshadowing. Like Winston's body language had provided him something important. But he couldn't connect the pieces, his mind still muddled from disease. He shook his head and reminded himself he wasn't some character in a third rate novel. Or worse, a hopeless romantic's fan fiction.

Once they reappeared on the road Alana rubbed her eyes, "Will, do you really think this is a good idea? I mean I'm glad you weren't hallucinating but that might be the better alternative to an actual dog. You just got out of the hospital and you want to adopt something?"

"Really? On Christmas?" Will pouted as the dog huddled between his legs. Alana threw her hands up in surrender knowing Will's mind was made up. Winston trotted up to Beverly and sniffed her knee. After his tail began to wag Beverly relented and scratched his ears.

"Damn it, you convincing son of a bitch," she laughed.

"They say dogs are unique judges of character," Will smirked and threw a glance from the side of his eye toward Hannibal. He frowned when he realized Hannibal had been looking at him this entire time (and had not taken offense to his verbal slight). Alana seemed upset and frowning from the same realization. Winston circled Will twice before sitting on top of his feet.

“Shall we continue?” Hannibal said and opened Will’s door. Beverly held her hands out.

“Oh no, no dog in my car. My roommate is allergic to dogs and is already going to kill me for having hair on my clothes. No way will they forgive me for having some in my passenger seat too,”

“Will and Winston can just ride with me, in Will’s car,” Hannibal smiled. Will scrunched his nose, unable to hide his dissatisfaction from his expression.

“But Beverly is already spending the night,”

“I will leave with Alana after dropping your car off, just as intended, all you will have to do is share your own car with me,” Hannibal leaned in slightly. His frosted breath tickled Will’s face, even though he wasn’t close enough for that to be possible. Winston whined against Will’s pants.

“Fine,” Will scoffed as Hannibal held the passenger door open for him. The man was lucky it wasn’t just the two of them or he’d swat Hannibal’s hand away. Or slam the door on it. Or scuff his expensive shoes up. Or make him slip on the icy road.

“Are you that happy to be riding with me? You’re grinning,” Hannibal teased.

“Something like that,” Will pet Winston’s coarse fur.

A comfortable silence blanketed the car as Hannibal drove. Winston relaxed in the warm backseat, leaving Will feeling naked next to his new driver. Classical music flowed through the car which had Will suppress a laugh.

“Is there something humoring you?”

“N-no it’s just…” Will coughed to try to cover his laugh. It didn’t work “you’re just so over the top. Holding the door open, insisting on driving me home, walking through the snow. I mean who actually listens to classical music?”

Hannibal raised his eyebrows and dread squeezed Will’s gut. He waved his hand and continued to dig his own grave.

“Not that there's anything wrong with any of that or that I don’t appreciate your… medical… advice. I just meant erm. I don’t know what I meant,” Will pressed his forehead to the glass and thought maybe he should just jump out of the car now.

Will was frustrated. Frustrated that this man was so charming, perfect, charismatic, accomplished, and insisted on hovering over someone like… Will. He knew that once Hannibal finally got to know him, that Lecter would recoil. He’d see every broken piece and scuffed boot and broken boat motor and sweaty sheet and *leave.*

One moment Will was a rearing pit viper, spitting his venom at anyone that got too close. He didn’t want Hannibal anywhere near him with his fake politeness and false concerns. Will wasn’t naive, he knew behind closed doors Hannibal gathered with his disgustingly rich acquaintances and spoke of this new basket case he’d been forced to acquire. Spoke about how unstable his new ward was. *Needed supervision*

The next Will would be a boa constrictor. Anyone close would be caught in his grip and he’d squeeze and squeeze until the blood stopped flowing, until they couldn’t run away. Then his curved teeth would sink into them, no matter how much they wanted Will away, he would dig deeper and deeper into the skin. Like fishhooks he’d make sure they were hooked.

Will knew Hannibal must think the man a fickle creature. One moment Will wouldn’t touch anyone, wouldn’t hold eye contact, spit obscenities, and rattled his tail. The next he’d brush shoulders with Beverly, laugh at Hannibal’s classical music, cradle Winston like the prodigal son, sink his curved teeth into anyone that gave him a smile. Hannibal would be right.

Will was always fickle.

Will was scared

***

Hannibal watched Will shift as far from him as possible in favor of the door. The good doctor fought the urge to reach out and touch the shy man. To comfort him and cradle. To run a finger down his reddening neck. To force him to hold eye contact. To hold his brain with his bare hands.

“I’m glad to know my actions to assist you are valued as such,” Hannibal said without sarcasm. Will made a noncommittal noise but didn't look back at Hannibal.

So Hannibal did what he always did.

He waited

Like a hawk in the tree watching a snake unfurl in the grass.

He waited

***

Jack shuddered despite the heavy jacket framing his shoulders.

Looking at the newest Ripper display was like trying to read English backwards. Jack knew he was familiar with the overarching concept, and should be able to understand, but the themes attempting to be conveyed were all jumbled up. So he stared at it longer trying to translate it into bite sized pieces that he would eventually fit together to make an overall, completed puzzle. A puzzle of the Ripper’s face.

“Really Ripper? On Christmas?” Price scoffed to no one.

“What organ is missing Price?”

“The brain sir” Price removed the top of the tableau’s head like removing the lid off a pot, “and the eyes. But the eyelids are glued shut so we didn’t notice right away,”

Jack gazed at the victim. He held a wrapped present (that the bomb squad already verified was safe), his mouth in a permanent half smile with his eyes crinkled on the sides, like he was laughing.

If Jack didn’t know any better, didn’t know the Ripper, this almost seemed caring for his usual work. The body wasn’t naked, it was bundled in warm, expensive winter clothing. Nearly wasteful, considering there were only two organs taken and not Ripper’s usual choices of trophy.

A shudder ran up Jack’s spine when he circled the corpse and saw the two cuts on the back of the poor man’s ankles.

“You’ll never believe what’s inside his head,” Price said after putting his camera away. Jack took his turn on the step stool to peer into the man’s cut open skull.

Inside lay small Polaroids of various people strapped to a small metal table. Some were asleep, some cut open, some awake and calm, some awake and screaming. He stumbled off the stool, trying to keep the breakfast Bella made him eat. There are even more than Jack knew about.

“They’re all Ripper victims. These have… never been seen before. Why is he showing them to us now?” Zeller begins placing the Polaroids into an evidence bag as Jack steadies himself on a tree.

“Holy fuck,” Price says. He is gazing down into the open present with a frozen look of horror. Jack stumbles to his side, and wishes he hadn’t.

Inside is a single Polaroid placed on a single mousetrap. This one picture is the most stomach churning discovery he's ever made at a Ripper site.

Miriam Lass

"On Christmas?" Jack clenches his fist. Her photo is the only one not in a metal table but in a small chair and she is smiling. Even when the tears reflect off her face from the flash, she is smiling.

***

In all her years of scavenging fresh stories off the FBI's kills, Freddie had never seen Jack cry. Hadn't seen him be anything but angry really.

But there he was, crying with a Polaroid clutched to his chest and kneeling in the snow.

So Freddie did what she always did. She took her role as the field mouse in the tall grass watching the predators play.

She took a picture of the pain.

She wrote an article.

She made money.

She survived.

Chapter End Notes

I hope to get another chapter posted in a couple days … if not see you all next time…

Free Palestine
Free Sudan
Free Congo

Silence

Chapter Summary

Will copes (no he doesn't)

Hannibal flirts (he really does)

Jack tries to make sense of his life (he can't)

Beverly snoozes (she can)

Nothing goes wrong

Chapter Notes

Well I lied. It was more than a few days. Tehehe

One of my one complaints about the show was that they left Will's autism behind :0. Not in this fic <3 will in his non verbal era. Hopefully it still flows ok…

A little embarrassed I totally forgot in chapter 9 Hannibal and Will had injuries from chapter 8 so if you're thinking you missed something last chapter… it's just me. My bad 😗 but I honestly really like that chapter so I'm not changing it tehehe

Also if you write fics of Hannigram too (especially monster fics) please do a shameless plug in the comments. Idk what I'm doing wrong but god I'm missing monster Hannibal SOMEONE HELP

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will sat up in bed. His eyes scanned the familiar bedroom as his heart pounded. *In through the nose out through the mouth, in through the nose and out through the mouth.* Once his eyes adjusted to the dark and the fog lifted from his brain, he could calm down.

It was just a bad dream. Silently he walked to the sofa where Beverly snored. Two fingers to her throat. Strong pulse. Tension melted from his shoulders as Winston stared up at him. The dog hadn't made a peep since Will brought him into the house. The mutt only watched the door.

"Relax buddy," Will massaged the dog's ears. It licked his sweaty hand, enjoying the salt, but walked to the door and laid in front of it. Blinking light from the oven's clock cast an eerily

glow on the surrounding area.

Wide awake now, Will paced. He circled the kitchen counter, looked out the bedroom window, circled the couch, looked out the front window, checked Beverly's breathing. Walls were closing in as he briefly thought of waking her up so they could go on a walk. The only thing that brought him out of such frantic pacing was Winston's wet nose on the back of his knee. To occupy his time he gently washed his abdomen incision. Then his forehead wounds. Right now they were red, puffy, and angry, but the doctor had promised after adequate healing they would be less noticable. He wrapped the incision in fresh gauze

Deciding against disturbing Beverly or trying sleep again, Will yanked the comforter from his bed and creeped toward the front door. After successfully getting out of the house without waking Bev, he plopped in his creaky rocking chair.

It was two hours until sunrise and Will was content to wait it out on the porch with Winston's light breathing to calm him. So he stared out into the dark forest, letting his eyes look without seeing anything.

The elk arrived.

Will glanced at Winston for guidance, but the dog remained calm and seated next to him. He must be hallucinating.

The elk pawed at the ground to grab his attention.

"Go away,"

The beast shook its antlers.

"You're not real,"

It took a step toward him.

"I don't know what you want,"

The elk snorted.

"Why is nothing *easy?* " Will felt tears sting his eyes. Winston placed his head on Will's lap and whined to go inside.

Will stared out into the darkness, his eyes darting slightly to different places in the woods. So Winston lay on his feet to keep them warm. He was a good boy, and didn't mind watching out for this new friend, even if he couldn't see what his new friend was so afraid of.

***

Hannibal turned the radio down as he pulled into Will's yard. He assumed the pair were still sleeping in these wee hours of the morning, and didn't want anything waking them.

That would be quite rude.

What *was* rude was the dirt spraying his windshield as he rocked down the last portion of the driveway, he tried not to scowl. The Tupperware in the passenger seat shook slightly but the full breakfast that laid inside would be unharmed so Hannibal ignored the rattling. His wrapped hand flexed on the steering wheel, purposefully sending a delicious jolt of pain up to his elbow. Will might have awoken some masochistic tendencies.

Quietly he closed the car door and headed toward Will's house. He was so focused on thoughts of breakfast surprises—and when to make a perfectly timed pun of the origin of their bacon and sausage— that Winston's growl nearly startled him. Nearly.

Eyes widened as Hannibal viewed the porch scene. Not only was Will awake before 7 am, but he was only in his underwear and a comforter. The man shook ever so slightly as he mumbled to nothing. Even though Winston was at attention with neck hair raised, Will belligerently kept stroking him. Like a nervous tick.

Hannibal resisted taking a picture.

"Will,"

Will clamped his mouth shut and covered his ears.

"I have made breakfast. I'm sure you haven't eaten yet,"

Will shook his head and began petting Winston again.

"Is Beverly awake?" Hannibal asked even though he knew the answer. Last night he attempted to bless Will with a good night's rest by providing hot chocolate (and a crushed pill to ensure the evening), but Beverly had drunk the concoction instead.

The incident was a bit of everyone's fault. Hannibal had made the drinks in any clean cup he found, but Will had insisted Hannibal give the cup with a border collie on it to Beverly. That was Beverly's cup, one she used everytime and he simply refused to drink out of that one. Apparently, *Will's* cup was the one with the baying elk on it. Hannibal was assigned that evening a cup with a wolf, even though he had tried to hand that one to Alana.

" *No, hers* is the one with a *cat,"* Will had snatched his curls in his hands and squeezed his eyes shut. At the time Hannibal had tried not to pout that Alana had a designated cup before he had.

Beverly had snatched the cup out of Hannibal's defensive hold to avoid any more arguing.

Though Hannibal had been a bit curious to see what would happen, he could admit it was a bit rude to assume anything within someone else's home. Especially one as particular as Graham.

Will shook his head and avoided Hannibal's stare. It was as he suspected, Beverly was still snoring on the sofa, just as the group had left her. Well she needed a good night's rest too.

Hannibal stuck to only yes or no questions, assuming this was a nonverbal episode for Will. He'd read about them just last week as Will slept soundly in the hospital.

Hannibal was a man of meticulous research, so he had found out about Will's autism quite easily, and would have noticed it upon first meeting anyways. That diagnosis seemed the only thing his parents had done right for him in the end. Though it was conveniently scratched from any medical record Hannibal could scrounge up.

So Hannibal had researched the topic both clinically and online. There could be no variables when it came to what Hannibal wanted to capture, especially not a species as rare, exquisite and *goddamn flighty* as Will Graham. So Lecter eliminated the mystery. Although he didn't think it would be so soon he got to use any research to his advantage.

He smirked. How could he expect less from the man whose first words were spoken at the age of 8 as "be". As in "Be quiet or you'll scare the fish away dad". Hannibal really did research thoroughly.

"I would like it if you came inside, once you are feeling calmer," Hannibal walked the porch steps and went into the house. Will's nervous stare followed his movements, but he ignored it.

The cupboard had four plates. Two looked brand new, so Hannibal set them to the side. The other two were worn, but the green one looked in even worse shape than the blue one. Hannibal took a gamble on the green one being "Will's plate" and the other must be Beverly's usual.

Once satisfied with the presentation of breakfast he exited the house and silently approached Will. The man was still gazing into the forest but had snapped out of his previous trance. His movements on Winston's fur were more nervous and erratic.

"I hope I picked the correct one this time," Hannibal handed the plate to Will. Will smiled softly and took the plate. Success.

"And which shall be mine?" Hannibal held up a pristine yellow plate and a deep maroon one. Will's eyes darted to Hannibal's eyes then quickly away. A red tipped, icy finger pointed to the maroon one. Hannibal bit back his grin, lest Will assume the doctor was belittling him.

If anything he wanted to worship this cold dusted deity.

"Thank you Will," Hannibal went back inside to make his own plate, allowing Will ample time to start slowly eating what he was offered.

Hannibal took the chair beside Will and rocked it slowly with his heels. Winston sat rigid and plastered to Will, but stared at Hannibal. He threw the dog an olive branch of peace (some jerky). Winston hesitated but soon wolfed down his own offering and relaxed against Will.

"No dog can resist my homemade lung jerky I've found," Hannibal said. Especially not human lung jerky, he left unsaid.

Will glanced down at Winston, nodded his head, and continued eating. Hannibal smiled and preened at how much Will was greedily shoveling into his mouth. Few things ruffled his feathers like someone enjoying his cooking did.

Hannibal began droning on about the breakfast to give Will background noise. He described how to make pancakes fluffier, syrup from scratch, how to ethically source a butcher for bacon, and how to not oversalt eggs. Will eventually finished and contently rocked in his chair. Winston licked Will's plate clean, a choice Hannibal was choosing to adamantly overlook at the moment.

Once silence enveloped them, Will pointed toward the front door. Hannibal found himself smiling again, something that happened in abundance around Will.

"Yes I'm ready to go inside as well," Hannibal held his arm out for Will to take. Will rolled his eyes and snatched his blanket closer, but snaked his arm through Hannibal's awaiting one.

Hannibal liked the weight of it, it was something he could get used to.

Would enjoy getting used to.

****

Will's mind was like a blank sheet of white. His tongue felt heavy, leering too close to his teeth. The words he wished to say were lodged in his chest, and he feared if he forced them out they'd stick in his throat to choke him to death.

Hannibal's voice was TV static, black chopping the white into pieces he could swallow. Pieces he could digest.

And like TV static, it was a bit annoying, but better than silence. Anything was better than silence.

The arm guiding Will was warm and quite… robust… for a psychologist. Will frowned at the thought that Hannibal had energy for a full time job, goofing off with the FBI, cooking, and the gym. Meanwhile Will went crazy from one FBI case and doing the dishes.

"Did I do something to elicit your pinching?" Hannibal laughed. Morning sun streamed in through the door and highlighted the golden flecks in Hannibal's eyes, that Will never noticed until they were so close. Will shrugged and swallowed. This is why he didn't look in people's eyes.

Hannibal's eyebrows raised when Will wiggled from the connecting skin, suddenly finding the contact too warm to continue.

As Hannibal did with all things, he took it with ease and simply began building the fire back up in the fireplace.

Winston circled the couch twice once the fire roared, plopping down on Beverly's legs to enjoy the warmth. This absence left Will once again feeling naked as Hannibal rejoined his side. With a start he realized he *was* practically naked in his thin boxers and blanket.

He resisted running to his bedroom in embarrassment and side stepped Lecter to go get dressed. Of course, Hannibal began following behind him worse than Winston did, which

forced Will to place a hand on his chest and shake his head.

“Are you going back to sleep?” Hannibal glowed at the hand on his chest. *Leaned into it.* That opportunist bastard. Will shook his head. He parted the blanket to show a small amount of his bare chest then pointed to his bedroom.

“Oh I see, just getting dressed?” Hannibal smiled that hyena smile, the smile that was absolutely not growing on Will. Pushing on his chest, Will slammed the door in Hannibal’s face, hoping to wake Beverly up.

Heart palpitations. That’s what this was. He placed his hand against his cold chest. Yes this was just random heart palpitations. He should probably go back to the hospital. One Hannibal was not an alumni of.

Will threw on clothes with the least amount of stains. He grimaced when glancing at his sweaty,rumpled sheets. Bundling them up, he threw the mess into his closet and shut the door quietly. Hannibal was the type to find some reason to sniff around every part of this house, so Will was preparing for that little leech.

A knock on the door

“Will?” The most impatient bastard on this planet said, “everything ok?”

Will considered climbing under the covers. Will considered decking Hannibal. Will considered climbing out his bedroom window.

Will opened his bedroom door and brandished a notebook instead.

Hannibal pouted, “So you’re going to eat my breakfast then ask me to go away?”

Will scribbled on his notebook. “Didn’t say go away. Said go outside. B sleeping”. They both ignored that moments ago Will had slammed the door, much more noise than a one-sided conversation. Hannibal schooled his expression.

When outside again, Will sighed. It helped his *heart condition* when he was in a more open space. Enclosed spaces plus a touchy Hannibal were not something to mix lightly, like mixing bleach and ammonia, sure to kill.

Hannibal watched Will. Will watched Hannibal (or Hannibal’s shoulder technically)

Finally he scribbled on his notebook, “are you always this involved with patients, Dr. Lecter?”

“Only ones worthy of friendship,” Hannibal smirked. Will plopped in his rocking chair. The stalker doctor followed suit. After a touch more of silence, Will scribbled again.

“I don’t find you very interesting,”

Hannibal leaned in, nearly touching their knees together and whispered,

“You will,”

***

Beverly woke up with killer dry mouth and a wicked headache. That hot chocolate had done a number on her. She cracked her back as she thought of ways to get Hannibal to spill the recipe.

Sunlight beamed into the window, revealing to her it was midday at the earliest. Damn that rich guy and his fancy ass hot chocolate. This means she missed his gourmet breakfast and maybe even lunch. All that hard work to rile Lecter up and agree to feed them every day down the toilet …

A soft chatter floated in from the porch. Beverly scratched her stomach and made her way toward the sound.

Hannibal was on the porch telling stories of his time as a surgeon. Will was not answering, but Beverly knew him well, after being friends for so many years. Seeing the notebook on his lap left her imagination to make its own connections.

Rarely, if ever, had she seen the man smiling openly. His body language was engaged, his knees and toes pointed toward Lecter, and he was tapping his fingers on his knees in a controlled expression of enthusiasm. Hannibal was speaking with his hands, demonstrating how he made precise cuts back in his hay day. There was a fond curl to his lips. What really caught her attention…

They were making some…intense… eye contact.

Beverly realized she must still be asleep. If not she has fallen into an alternate reality.

“Ok what the *hell* happened when I was asleep?” she bellowed.

****

Jack stared lifelessly at the third body. The end of another sounder, and he had no clues once again. His mind was a million miles away, thinking of nothing but Bella and her chemo. And of the polaroid in his wallet.

This one was the strangest yet. It was another curly headed man in expensive winter clothing with a scarf covering the man up to his nose.

“What’s missing, Price?” Jack sighed.

Price unzipped the jacket, revealing the man’s lack of torso skin. The victim’s rib cage was on full display, minus the heart and lungs. At least this tableau was more on brand trophy wise for the Ripper.

“Lungs and tongue,” Price began unwrapping the victim’s scarf.

“I don’t see a heart,” Jack quipped.

“It’s here, just… moved,” Price revealed the man had been skinned from his nose down. Their teeth were on full display, mimicking a giant grimace-like smile. Price pried the man’s mouth open to reveal half of his heart lying in the spot his tongue should be.

“When has the Ripper ever taken half of anything, especially a trophy?” Jack’s mind was reeling. Price beckoned him closer and placed his boss’ gloved hand on the victim’s throat.

“That’s where the other half is. I think the victim choked on it,”

****

Hannibal placed two plates in front of Will and Beverly. Both of their mouths watered. Hannibal was practically Pavlov dogging them, training them to crave his cooking every time they saw a plate.

“What’s on the menu tonight?” Beverly asked politely. Will was already digging in, still experiencing his bout of muteness. Hannibal preened under both of their reactions.

“Pork cheek braised in tomato wine sauce,”

“Dr. Lecter, if Will won’t put out, I just might have to if it keeps this food coming,” Beverly said between mouthfuls. Will kicked her under the table and scowled at his plate. Will’s had many more vegetables to accommodate his recent surgery.

“Don’t worry, I don’t plan on stopping anytime soon,” Hannibal smirked, sipping his wine.

Somewhere a phone was buzzing. All three ignored it.

Chapter End Notes

Will just like me fr (autistic + gay)

Socials -> pink.chapstick
But no obligation :-). I just have to shamelessly plug myself somewhere

Extra extra

Chapter Summary

Tattle crime, Freddie has got the scoop!

Chapter Notes

I always take Freddie with a grain of salt. This is how I imagine her articles would be. Overly dramatic and issuing a bit of a victim complex. I wonder how everyone will take this published article…

See the end of the chapter for more notes

TATTLE CRIME

ARTICLE 347 on DECEMBER 25th 20XX

WHO IS SANTA THIS YEAR?

Hello my faithful readers,

Thank you for the continued support of your reading, and I'm sure the community should thank you for staying informed and vigilant in such dire times.

From reliable sources I have been bestowed this photograph of yet another Chesapeake Ripper tableau. I know it is blurry, but this job is quite dangerous and I'm doing everything in my power to get you the facts. I do not know how many nights I have been without sleep.

Are you lacking sleep? Dr. Mozzarella soothing cheese bites will take the edge right out of your cheddar and leave you feeling *Gouda.*

Per my last article we have discussed and dissected the meanings behind the frozen lady. Now we must dive into this tableau bearing gifts of the most supernatural disorder.

So supernatural it has BAU head Jack Crawford on his knees.

This strange tableau isn't like the others. No where is stark nudity but a carefully bundled body. The victim appears to be laughing even without the use of his brain.

You heard me, readers.

Usually our devil chooses his apples of temptation from the torso variety. Lungs, hearts, kidneys , even a stomach back in the beginning if I recall correctly.

What has motivated our most notorious killer to change his modus operandi? What external force is brave enough (or stupid enough) to change the unchangable? The immovable?

Is your gut feeling a bit *immovable?* Try Mr. Gut's Moving Along Pills. Because you should never be stopped!

It is my theory—and I assure you by next article it will yours too— that Mr (or Mrs. Because women can do anything men do and usually better) Ripper has found someone new as prey. As obsession.

The last two victims have been men of the same stature, weight, and appearance. They have both been left smiling, in some gruesome form, and both of their organs have been uniquely placed, even for a Ripper.

No brain left for our first giftgiver. A heart (the Ripper's usual go to) left in the throat of our second victim.

I won't lie to you dear reader. *I never lie to you,* but I don't know what is in the future for our community. When even the Ripper loses his consistency, then I am not sure what hope we have left to avoid them.

I am not sure who the woman in the polaroid is or what makes her so special to the Ripper and Jack alike, but I assure you I'm working tirelessly to find out why it has zipped the lips of every informant.

What I do know is the FBI knows less than they say. If a mere, albeit fearless, reporter can scrounge this up from her own bootstraps then what have the agents with funds and labs at their fingertips been doing? Why can they not scrounge up even a suspect?

Maybe it's an inside job.

Now I remind you of a well known topic in our Tattle Crime universe. Will Graham.

First let's take a note of his past. Mr. Graham has been consistently present in as many Ripper investigations that he can insert himself into. Constantly he is elevating the Ripper to an above human status and relinquishing the FBI's ability to catch this terror. I have personally heard Graham scoff at the thought that the Ripper will ever be proven and found. There is something even more disturbing, the fact that Will didn't get picked for these cases, he volunteered.

Second let us notice the last two victims specifically. Who do they resemble? None other than our William. Is this a specific form of narcissism never before seen? Is Will sacrificing any

person that dares encroach on his perceived godhood?

Autistic? More like narcissistic.

I know what you're thinking, Freddie, Freddie, Freddie. Aren't you picking on an innocent FBI agent? That is where you are doubting yourself dear reader.

Mr. Graham has just gotten out of the hospital for a psychotic break at a crime scene. Self inflicted wounds have littered his body, which I have attached evidence of next to our newest skinned victim. Could this be a coincidence? What if our agent has covered the evidence of the victim's skin beneath his nails with his own skin?

News flash, Graham *isn't* an agent. That's right readers, the man tasked with protecting us against the most notorious serial killer wasn't stable enough to pass a psych evaluation from our FBI.

Why does he help them you may ask? Because *he thinks* like these maniacs so well he can predict their every move or motivation. I ask you dear reader to not simply consume what the media is attempting to spoon feed you. Take a deeper look from the source that has provided you unfiltered facts and theories since the time they had a website.

Are you struggling with your own website? Join Mrs. Digital's online course by February 02 with code *Killer* to get your first week free!

If you do not see my newsletter updated by next week, just know that I have chosen this path of justice for your sake, and that I would not have changed my path for anything.

I have to leave you with more questions, but who is this new "Santa" bearing gifts for our community and the FBI? What are they making in their workshop for all the bad boys and girls of the world? Is this an ominous omen for the year to come? Will this be the year of the Ripper?

And If you're reading this Ripper, I have just one question,

Who is changing you?

Chapter End Notes

I hope you had fun 😋
Also convo I imagined with them

Freddie: will what are your pronouns
Will:he/him… why?
Freddie: well I'm not misgendering you in my slander article. I'm not a monster.

The Bacchus

Chapter Summary

The Ripper starts another sounder, can anyone figure it out in time to stop the next two kills? Was Freddie right?

On an unrelated note, Lecter begins to consider throwing a dinner party! What a standup guy! <3 and Franklyn gets a referral. I'm sure he'll take it so well!!

Nothing goes wrong

Chapter Notes

We just hit 30k mothafucks😎
Thanks for reading and commenting so far! I really never thought this story would get any kudos🥹

Also if there are any Venom x Eddie lovers out there I done started a fanfic for them too, but won't be updating as much as this one <3

My love for Hannigram is all consuming

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Beverly looked at her phone, she was a bit scared to see Will's name pop up, even if it was only a text. When she had told him to check out Freddie's newest article she hadn't *actually* expected the man to read it. I mean when has that guy actually ever listened to her anyways?

Will: I'm coming into the lab. Don't run.

She sighed but forfeited her will to escape. It wasn't the fact that Will would be angry, especially because he wasn't angry at her, it was the fact that it was Tattle Crime.

Will hated that shit show more than anyone. He always complained about how she discredited the Ripper's works, using them for a cheap sideshow attraction instead of treating them as actual art. Beverly frowned at the memory. No one wanted to admit it out loud, but Will was weird the way he talked about the Ripper. A knock on the door snapped her away from the feeling of foreboding.

"Come in Will,"

Will stomped in and began pacing across the room. He opened his mouth, flung his hands around then closed his mouth without a word. Instead, he took out a notebook and began scribbling.

“Still not feeling chatty I see,” Beverly said without malice. After dinner with Hannibal yesterday Will was still not speaking. This was one of the longest episodes Will had displayed, even in front of Beverly.

He furiously scribbled until his page ripped. Without skipping a beat he crumbled it up and threw it in the trash to start again.

“If Jack finds out you’re here he’s going to make you work. If Alana finds out she’ll probably admit you back to a hospital,” Beverly chuckled then raised an eyebrow, “wait how did you get here without a shadow?”

Will flipped a couple pages and wrote slowly. Satisfied, he flipped it over with a grin.

I told Hannibal it was Alana’s shift today.

“It is Alana’s shift today,”

Last minute meeting. I told her Hannibal and I discussed it and he would cover her.

“Let me guess, you never told him,”

Will tapped his nose and gave a thumbs up. Beverly rolled her eyes. She honestly didn’t think Will needed a babysitter, but she was not about to fight Alana or Hannibal about it, both weirdly protective over Will.

“And what happens when Lecter brings you lunch in about—“ she checked her watch “—10 minutes. Like he does everyday at noon? God the prick is probably there now, he’s always early,”

Will scoffed and shrugged. Her phone buzzed in her pocket, a bold “ *Dr. Lecter”* shining on screen. She shoved the phone into Will’s face as he shook his head.

Do NOT answer that. I can’t take them hovering anymore.

“Will they’re only doing it because they care,”

Then why aren’t you up my ass too?

“I’ve known you a bit longer, I know your limits,” Beverly smiled. “Give them some time. Besides I agree you shouldn’t be at work, I just don’t think you need a baby— a chaperone,”

Beverly and Will had known each other since academy days. One rainy afternoon Will had offered her his only umbrella. Another day Beverly had beat the shit out of some guys pressuring Will to do their paper for them. They’d been close ever since, Will helping Beverly with studies and Beverly helping Will with boundaries and social situations.

Will pursed his lips. **Back to Freddie's article.**

Beverly wanted to swear. She'd thought she'd gotten out of that rant.

"Katz, why the *hell* is Lecter calling my phone?" Jack bellowed down the hallways. No time to hide, Will and Beverly were caught in his range as he slammed the door open.

"What— oh Will. Great to see you're feeling better. We actually just got a Ripper body we can't make heads or tails of, you want in?" Jack jumped right to the point. Something Beverly both hated and appreciated about the man.

Beverly simultaneously praised the one above she got out of Will's rant, and cursed inwardly at Jack's cheap trick. She wouldn't infantilize Will by answering for him, but they all knew it was a low blow. That Will couldn't help himself when it came to the Ripper.

Yeah I should be better now, just can't stay in the cold too long.

"Oh you're… doing that thing again," Jack said as he waved a finger over Will's outstretched notebook. Beverly turned to Will with crossed arms.

"If you go then I'm answering this," Beverly held up her vibrating phone. Will grimaced but followed Jack out of the room, giving her a silent answer. Beverly sighed at being caught in the middle of Lecter and Will's game of hide and seek.

"Miss Kantz, how are you?" Hannibal sounded cordial enough, but Beverly could practically hear him smoothing the fabric of his suit in annoyance.

"Will is fine. Still silent but obviously fine enough to drive to my lab. Just left with Jack to a crime scene actually," Beverly wasn't delusional. Lecter didn't give a shit about how she was.

There was a pause.

"Thank you for the information. Do you know which scene he'll be visiting?"

"What am I, Will's mother? Call Jack," Beverly grew a wicked sense of payback for interrupting her lunch, "I'm sure if you suggest it then Jack would pick you up on the way,"

"Thank you again, I'll be in contact," Hannibal said, an obvious smirk growing on his face. Beverly ended the call before Hannibal could grill her anymore. She could finally relax at her desk, alone with her cold pizza and Dr. Pepper.

After the third slice she mulled over her conversation with Hannibal. Nonchalantly the man had asked which crime scene they would be going to, but Jack had only mentioned one body found so far. Weird. She popped a piece of gum in. Maybe he'd gotten confused with the last sounder since the Ripper was killing closer and closer together. That sounded about right, though she didn't know Hannibal to make such a mistake.

When she thought about it she really didn't know Hannibal at all.

She laughed in the empty room. Will never got to rant about that stupid article she realized. Which meant Hannibal and Jack were getting an *earful* later. Serves them right.

Or would it be an eyeful? Since Will was writing?

****

“I don’t even remember giving that guy my number,” Jack grimaced. Will shook his head not to pick up. He was quickly writing *why* not to pick up the call in his notebook but Jack had already answered by the time he turned it around.

“Yeah that should be fine, we could use an old surgeon’s opinion on the Ripper anyways,” Jack tapped his fingers on the steering wheel. Will deflated against his seat, his “alone time” with the Ripper vanquished.

The Ripper just finished a sounder. I read the report this morning. Why would they be starting another one so soon ?

Jack didn’t question how the hell Will could have done that with the two helicopter parents he’d acquired. Instead he explained,

“They started a new one this morning. Busy guy,”

That can’t be. It doesn’t match their patterns at all. Why start so early?

“I was hoping that’d be something you’d tell me,” Jack ground his teeth and turned on the radio. For once, Will got the hint and placed his pen down.

The car pulled into Will’s house too soon, there Hannibal was waiting in the yard after delivering lunch. Or attempting to deliver lunch if Will hadn’t made a quick jailbreak this morning. Hannibal was wearing the gaudiest suit underneath the gaudiest jacket topped with a gaudy smirk. Will rolled his eyes, thanking everything above that he had gotten shotgun and wasn’t stuck in the back seat with Lecter.

“Good morning gentlemen. Thank you for letting me tag along to the scene,” Hannibal handed Will a plastic wrapped sandwich. Begrudgingly, Will unwrapped it to eat, really just to appease Lecter, but everything Hannibal created was so *goddamn delicious.*

Will sighed and relaxed in his seat with a full belly, a bit content with the envious look in Jack’s eyes.

“You’ll have to forgive Graham. He’s… well right now he’s not ignoring you per say , you see the notebook, I mean sometimes—“ Jack started, relieved when Hannibal cut him off.

“Will and I have discussed his selective mutism. His notebook speaks for him sufficiently. How was the sandwich?”

Will handed the plastic wrapped tomatoes to Hannibal as answer. There was a time, a brief time, one that his father would rather have Will never remember, that food was scarce. Work was scarce for his single parent, a roof over their heads was scarce even, and Will was picky

anyways so sometimes the food scraped together with his father's paycheck was still left uneaten. Safe foods like sandwiches were an every night thing, ones with too much mayonnaise and not enough egg or turkey or whatever his father could get at the local Jiffy. Will never had the heart to tell his father he was getting tired of them.

Only in recent years Will had been able to choke them down again, and it helped that the one in the FBI vending machine had no mayonnaise. Hannibal's sandwich was delicious with light mustard, and meat that was plentiful. That didn't mean Will miraculously liked tomatoes though.

"You ate a BLT without tomatoes?" Hannibal unwrapped the thin tomatoes and ate them, never one to waste a scrap of food. Will scrunched his nose at the sight. How could anyone eat something so slimy?

It was good without it. Did you candy the bacon?

"Why yes I did, thank you for noticing," Hannibal preened and launched into a detailed explanation on how to candy bacon and pickle onions. Jack felt a headache coming on, but Will drummed his fingers against his knee, content to listen.

The GPS rang out a 10 minute warning as Will turned to Hannibal with his palm facing up. Hannibal unzipped his bag and pulled out two small containers.

Last night Will had challenged Hannibal, a dangerous thing to do he knew, but there was no way someone was *this* perfect. So Will was unbelieving that Lecter could not only cook savory but desserts too.

"Yes yes I remembered the pudding, even packed Jack one as an unbiased witness," Hannibal conceded the hope that Will would ever use pleasantries at this rate.

Rich chocolate flavor melted against Will's tongue. He definitely lost this bet, that doctor really was too talented in the kitchen. On a corner of his notebook scribbled a note, tore it off, and slyly passed it to Hannibal.

Thank you

Will was too embarrassed to look behind him, so he didn't see Hannibal slide the note into his breast pocket.

Jack's car pulled into the fresh scene and Will's skin blazed with anticipation. The last weeks had felt utterly confining so he was excited to climb into the Ripper's space, though he'd never tell that to anyone.

Will was about to sprint to the scene, but thought better of the image it would display. So he rolled his shoulders in irritation, convinced Lecter and Jack were moving slow on purpose.

He surveyed the park they'd driven to. If it weren't an active crime scene Will would think it a good place to hike or take his dogs for a sprint. Trees outlined a dense clearing littered with

picnic tables and a wooden playground. In the distance Will thought he even saw a dilapidated tennis court.

“It’s right up ahead at the gazebo,” Jack pointed. Will flexed his fists open and closed to try and appear nonchalant. Will pointed and raised his eyebrows. Jack nodded his approval.

Will sidestepped around Hannibal and speed walked to the scene, though Lecter kept pace slightly behind him. The wooden gazebo steps creaked under his weight as he surveyed the scene.

“Beautiful,” Will breathed “It’s the *Bacchus,* ”

A young man sat at the table in the middle of the gazebo, half covered in a white tunic and donned with a twisting crown of grape vines and thorns. Blood lightly dusted his scalp where the thorns stabbed into his skin before he had died. His hands held a goblet to the viewer, filled with blood instead of the traditional wine that the original painting displayed. A bowl of cut open pomegranates and apples adorned the table in front of him, in the middle of the bowl sat a beautifully displayed, perfectly cooked liver. It was stuffed with something Will was too uncultured to recognize, and wrapped in thin twine. It must be the victim’s own liver, Will assumed.

“The Ripper is inviting someone to eat with them,” Will thought out loud. A pair of gloves snapped against his wrist as they hovered over the body in close scrutinization. It nearly felt disrespectful to touch something so beautiful. Like one would hesitate touching the original Mona Lisa.

When he pushed the tunic slightly to the right Will was rewarded with a correct hunch. Unlike the left side of the torso, which was whole, porcelain skin, the right side was completely devoid of skin. Bleach white ribs caged in a whole, intact heart and lungs, Will predicted the kidneys wouldn’t be there when they performed the autopsy. Will mumbled these observations aloud, not caring if Jack or Lecter took any consideration of them.

“So what Freddie was right? Someone is changing the Ripper? The Ripper wants someone to dine with them?”

Will instantly soured. Not only had Jack thrust him from his analytical zone, but he’d been reminded of that horrific, crude article.

“Jack it’s nothing like—“ Will turned and caught Hannibal’s eyes by accident. Air whooshed from his lungs upon connection, causing him to sputter slightly on the spot.

The gaze ignited a burrowed heat in Will’s chest, but also made his skin prickle in fear. Hannibal’s face was a mask of neutral, but below his eyes swam a predator on the prowl, closing in on an injured prey. It was all consuming, admiring yet ferocious in nature, like a cosmic force swallowing and crushing Will in its depth. Like Will was a snared badger staring down a drooling fox.

Both predators, but he was at a distinct disadvantage, effectively turning Will into the prey. What advantage Hannibal had over him Will couldn’t place.

The uncanny, sudden passion made Will realize something so crucial, something he'd been actively ignoring since he met the man. Before now, he'd *never* been able to read Hannibal, never been able to empathize with him or glean any emotions behind such a tight mask.

Will never wanted to admit it until now because it had been so *relieving.* Since he'd met Hannibal he found someone he could be 100% Will with, no one forcing their expectations or opinions or disappointments or insecurities or trying to manipulate him behind the scenes…

"Tell me, why do you think this is an invitation?" Hannibal reiterated after Will was silent for too long, lost in thought as he always was. When Hannibal stepped toward him, he instinctively stepped back. Will wasn't sure why, but the action seemed to ruffle Lecter's feathers in a hurt tone.

Will was scared, just this morning he'd been so happy to find someone he couldn't read, but now he wanted nothing more than to see what Lecter was thinking. What Hannibal was planning at this moment.

Sensing the weird atmosphere, Jack kept his mouth shut. The only moment Will had ever wanted Jack to interrupt was the time Jack proved his ability to read a room.

"Well… the outstretched hand and cup. The pre-cut fruit for easier sharing with a hearty meal in the middle. The liver is one of the healthiest organs to consume, nutrientally wise. Our victim is facing the entrance of the gazebo, where any onlookers would be entering. The half open garment…" Will trailed off. Talking about the Ripper had never been hard for him, but suddenly Will was on a bright stage with only Hannibal in the audience.

"What else do you see Will?"

"The Ripper is notoriously hard for even me to understand, Dr. Lecter. These are just my initial observations. After the autopsy I can glean more," Will lied. He could spend hours dissecting a Ripper case, each more artful and delicate than the last, but something told him not to divulge any more to Hannibal. Something primal and instinctive. Something he was afraid to think anymore about with the predator right next to him. Something that nearly felt just a tiny bit too close to being turned on.

Hannibal's face cracked in what Will assumed was meant to be an understanding smile, but came off as more of a frustrated grimace. Will checked his watch, enough time had passed he surprisingly wanted a snack, realizing Hannibal's cooking was spoiling him a bit.

"We're stopping today already Graham? Usually you sit for hours at these thing—" Jack so helpfully decided now was the time to interject.

"Yes," Will cut him off, "Yes that's all for this one. I just need some more time to think about… this one. I'll give you my notes when I have more," Will began walking back to the vehicle, careful not to touch Hannibal as he walked past toward the entrance of the gazebo.

The way back was nearly silent, until Jack opened his giant mouth again with all the wrong things.

“Suspicious how Freddie was so close this time. She must have someone on the inside—“

“ *Close?”* Will wailed, “oh *please* Jack the only thing that woman is close to is an obstruction of justice charge,”

“She predicted—“

“No, she didn’t! The Ripper doesn’t *need* anyone, they might want someone to eat with someone sure, but *need?* Someone that could actually change the Ripper’s MO, their personality, their way of creation? Never. No one exists that can change someone like the Ripper. They’re probably just an interesting new toy, one the Ripper will eventually get bored of,”

“What other reason would they have to be obsessed with someone?” Jack scowled toward the road when Will scoffed.

“Oh please, the Ripper doesn’t see people as worth anything. If they *are* obsessed with someone…” Will swallowed, panic tightening his chest, “then I pray for them. Honestly, I don’t know what the Ripper would do to them. Nothing good I’d assume,”

“Why would their MO be changing then? Why are we seeing this new side to the Ripper?” Jack huffed.

“It’s *not* a new side. They’re still making art through violence, still eating their victim’s organs, still turning ugly, wretched, rude things into unparalleled art,” Will chewed his cheek and tacked on, “or at least that’s how the Ripper sees their work,”

“Will—“

“I’m not a fucking magician Jack, maybe they’re throwing a goddamn dinner party for all I know,” Will rubbed his temples as an oncoming headache was swiftly approaching. His aching abdomen incision helped nothing.

Thankfully, Hannibal was silent in the back seat for once.

****

Hannibal was not the type of man to be easily frustrated. Irked? Yes. Many people and things rubbed him the wrong way. Frustrated? No. Solutions often curled in his lap like a loving cat, always at the tips of his fingers to stroke. Will was more of a hissing cat in the corner with claws extended and swiping for blood.

Though that may be why Hannibal desperately wanted to tame him. Everyday people bore him, constantly rubbing for his attention, purring even as he strangled them. Will was *fun.* Something he worked for, coaxed and cooed at every day, yet he remained feral and unappreciative. His claws and fangs always flashing, reminding Hannibal they were there, yet never drawing blood from Hannibal himself.

Funny that Hannibal had desperately wanted something to pursue for years. Now that he had it, Lecter wanted *more.* He wanted Will in his grasp at all times, tamed and groomed to purr

on his lap. The chase was fun, exhilarating, but so were the thoughts of domestic living with someone who fully understood everything Hannibal was. It was more exhilarating than any chase could prove to be.

“That’s why I just don’t think a referral is my best option Dr. Lecter!” Franklyn wailed into a napkin. Hannibal blinked, surprised by his own rudeness of tuning Franklyn out.

“Franklyn, you are utterly obsessed with me. I’m your psychiatrist not your friend, but you’ve lost sight of that,”

“I haven’t Dr. Lecter truly!”

“You followed me to the opera. And my cheese store Franklyn,”

“We just like the same things! Hannibal *please”*

“Dr. Lecter,” Hannibal corrected him with a raised hand. “And that’s our hour Franklyn. I’ll be emailing you the information of your new psychiatrist later this week,” Hannibal curtly stood and opened his office door, beckoning Franklyn to use it.

Franklyn dramatically boo-hooed some more but Hannibal remained steadfast in his set boundary. Finally, the man picked himself from the chair and waddled toward the door. A trail of used napkins followed him and Hannibal had never been more sure of a referral in his career.

He could handle delusional stalking, but uncleanliness in another person’s space? Diabolical. Unforgivable.

“Afternoon Hannibal, I’m returning your Tupperware from that casserole you— oh, I’m sorry, I didn’t know you had another appointment before mine,” Will shifted awkwardly in the waiting room, and tucked the Tupperware back behind his back. Hannibal smiled slightly.

“That’s alright Will, we were just finishing up now. Please come in,” Hannibal felt Franklyn bristle next to him. Whether it was the causal use of Hannibal’s first name, the implications that Hannibal had cooked for Will, or the way that Hannibal’s shoulders relaxed a fraction at the mere sight of this sweaty, blue collar man (or a combination of all of it) that sent Franklyn over the neurotic edge, Hannibal didn’t really care. If Franklyn threatened either one of them then Hannibal would just eat him in a couple years.

Will wordlessly nodded and slid past Franklyn without touching either man. Hannibal’s eyes followed him with a predator’s starving gaze.

“Dr. Lecter…” Franklyn’s bottom lip trembled. If Hannibal could guess it was a move that usually motivated his parent’s judgment, but stopped having any charm after the man had grown past the age of three.

“Enjoy your Sunday Franklyn,” Hannibal promptly closed the office door in the crying man’s face.

“Do you… move our chairs closer for appointments?” Will scratched absentmindedly at his forehead, disrupting the puckered skin still healing there. Hannibal tried to insist Will continue to rest with such new incisions, but Will had insisted right back that he was fine and could go back to normal activities immediately.

“I haven’t noticed such a thing,” Hannibal smoothly lied through being caught in the act. Of course he moved their chairs closer each session, how else could he train Will to be relaxed with close proximity?

“You’re so lucky Alana won’t rubber stamp me or I would not be showing up to these,” Will spat out. Carefully, he set Hannibal’s glass Tupperware dish on the doctor’s desk, already washed and practically shining clean.

“Lucky for both of us,” Hannibal gestured toward the empty chair across from himself. Will scrunched his nose in disgust and began running his fingers down the spine of the surrounding books, back toward Lecter and his invitation. Hannibal was lying to himself.

The chase was just as fun as domestication.

“Have you found out anything more about the latest Ripper case?” *Have you been thinking of me?*

Will stopped. Frozen in place like a deer in the beams of a truck going 80. Hannibal realized back at the scene he’d revealed a bit too much of himself, a rarity for his usual unyielding control on his urges and impulses. Will, that clever, cunning man, had picked up on it immediately of course.

One day Hannibal reminded himself *introduce your real self slowly and one day you’ll be understanding companions. Too much and Will might bolt.*

“Not yet. I have another crime scene I’m going to today, Jack thinks it’s another Ripper victim but I’m not so sure. Told him I couldn’t cancel our appointment, thought it’d be too rude,” Will resumed his nervous browsing of shelves.

Hannibal’s jaw ticked. It wasn’t a Ripper victim. Dinner preparations had left him little time to kill since earlier in the week, especially when he liked his meat as fresh as possible.

“Why would Jack think it’s a Ripper victim?”

“Opera house. That’s where it is apparently. Very Ripper-like location,” Will quipped. Finally, he circled around the office and hovered around the empty chair. Lecter tried not to be reminded of a feral cat hovering suspiciously over a piece of offered chicken.

“How are your night terrors Will?” Lecter adored the emotions that flooded the man’s face. Anger (that Hannibal changed the subject from the Ripper and poked an open wound), fear (that Hannibal would see the darkness from his dreams. That Hannibal would be afraid of Will, that Hannibal would take advantage of Will’s vulnerability), reluctance (to address the dark circles so prominently on Will’s face).

“They’re fine,”

“I can’t help you if you don’t even speak to me,” Hannibal feigned hurt in his tone. Ever since Hannibal had taken his mute episode with stride Will had given him the slightest bit of trust, something Hannibal was determined to capitalize on.

“They’re not as frequent. I still sweat and… have dreams, but they’re not keeping me awake as frequently,” Will subconsciously scratched at his abdomen incision.

“What type of dreams?” Hannibal closed in, leaning every so slightly. Heat creeped onto Will’s neck. He placed his head on his hand, covering his mouth.

“Good ones,” he mumbled as he gazed out the window listlessly.

“Then pray tell, why are they keeping you awake?” Hannibal placed the trap, practically salivating at the idea of it springing closed on Will. Will leaned closer, their noses too far away to be flirty but much too close to be professional.

“I do believe that is our hour, Dr. Lecter,” Will smiled and stood. Hannibal shot a scowl toward the clock when he found Will was correct, as if it were the clock’s fault time had passed so quickly.

“Yes I suppose it is,” Hannibal watched Will’s face battle emotions, obviously wanting to ask Hannibal something without actually asking. All day he could have watched Will contort in discomfort. After a few moments, the underdog won because Will sighed in defeat as he asked,

“Are you joining me in this crime scene too? The opera one?”

Hannibal wanted to burst into frustrated flames, for once seriously thinking about being utterly rude and canceling his next three appointments. Will practically *invited* Hannibal to watch him work, something they both knew held meaningful weight as a gesture. He clenched and unclenched his fists then held the door open for Will, hardly able to slap a smile on his face.

“Thank you Will, but *unfortunately* I have three more appointments today, so I cannot join your excursion as it would be in violation of my strict cancellation policy. Next time I assure you, I would be utterly ecstatic to participate,”

Will nodded, seemingly disappointed and relieved at the same time, as he left the office.

After Hannibal watched Will drive away, toward a crime scene that was not his own, he knew he’d have to take this frustration out on something.

Slowly, careful steps to calm himself, he stalked toward his desk. He took the glass dish in his hands. He slammed it down with his eyes closed, enjoying the sound of it breaking underneath him. He gazed at the broken shards with his natural, unmasked, cold stare. He loved the way that it broke apart, sprawling across the floor, as if in a desperate attempt to stay whole. An attempt that was futile in the face of Hannibal’s wrath.

Hannibal then swept up his mess. He readjusted his mask. He welcomed the next appointment in. He tried not to fall asleep as she droned on about her rebellious teen who insisted he was born in the wrong body, not that he wasn't a boy, *oh god she wasn't transphobic* no *Dr. Lecter heaven forbid,* but that he wasn't a *human* boy. She droned on about how scared she was that he was turning 18 soon, that he would move out and do something horrible without his mother's watchful eyes.

Hannibal offered to take him on as a client. Maybe he could learn a thing or two about taming if he started with an easier target first.

Chapter End Notes

Also just so you know when you do this story in "print view" in google docs it's literally already more than 100 pages long. So congrats if you've read this far you're like halfway through a book

Prodigy

Chapter Summary

Will investigates this new serial killer

Hannibal meets a new client

Chapter Notes

Buckle up folks this is my longest chapter yet, about 6K! I'm going to apologize in advance that (in my opinion) this chapter is a tad rushed. I just don't really like Tobias, so I wanted his chapter to be more of a small stepping stone for Randall/Matthew & Will/Hannibal then an entire arc. Also I'm … kinda ready for the romance to start. This slow burn is getting a little slow. So it's coming up!

Also, Randall and Matthew will start to become regulars in this story but don't worry, I plan the focus to be on Hannigram. I just think Randall and Matthew were great characters with not enough screen time (meaning that after I'm done with this one I'm already planning their own spin off!!)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will rolled his shoulders as he walked toward the opera house. He'd never been to one of these things and hoped to never enter one again.

The clear, crystal doors were utterly gaudy, reminding Will of a certain someone. Plush carpet bounced with each step, as if knowing Will didn't belong there and was trying to evict him. Once into the auditorium, Jack barked him closer, even though Will was walking as fast as he could without sprinting. He sighed and began to jog to the stage.

"This isn't the Ripper Jack," Will said from a distance. This revelation left Will utterly disinterested in the case now, a fact he was desperately trying to hide on his face.

The murder was straightforward. The musician's neck was stretched skyward with strings stretching across his hollow throat. Obviously the culprit was a fellow musician with intricate knowledge of how instruments were constructed.

While beautiful, it was lacking. It was run of the mill "I'm doing this because I didn't get what I want" bullshit. It wasn't art. It wasn't elevating.

Jack could tell Will had an early mental check out. Rather than argue, for once, Jack sighed. His fight was drained out of him with his wife getting worse and the intense fight with Bloom earlier that day.

“After discussing your *condition* with Alana, we have compromised to keep you on classroom duty for all cases other than the Ripper,” Jack sighed once more for good measure.

Will feigned disappointment with a nod but was frankly ecstatic at this development. All cases, other than the Ripper, were so utterly boring that Will was getting restless. It made him want the Ripper to give him something new to solve, a line of thought he knew was dangerous. Although this little stunt looked interesting on the outside, it lacked any class and symbolism the Ripper never failed to deliver on.

“Check music shops that specialize in their own strings. And ones that offer lessons. This one stinks of arrogance, and anyone arrogant enough to kill someone is arrogant enough to think their “wisdom” needs to be passed down to successors,” Will rolled his eyes. Jack jotted that down on a piece of paper.

“One more thing Will,” Jack said reluctantly. Will rolled his shoulders.

“You’ll have an assistant while on teaching duties, to lighten your burden,” Jack bit down especially hard on the last word. Will sputtered,

“ *Assistant?* That’s not fucking happening Jack, I can run a damn classroom,” Will bared his teeth. Jack rubbed his eyes.

“Listen this is the only way Alana is letting you help with even the Ripper cases. She practically peeled my wallpaper apart with her nagging today about me taking you to the last one. So yes, to save my sanity, you’re gonna have a damn assistant,”

A young man waved from behind Jack, absolutely beaming at Will. Guilt stabbed his gut, if Will had known the poor sap was right behind him he wouldn’t have worded it so harshly. Or maybe Will was just telling himself that to feel better.

“Dr. Graham! I’m a huge fan sir, I love your work on—“

“This is Matthew Brown, Graham. He’s a new recruit accepted just last week and the only one that volunteered to be an unpaid assistant to a cranky professor, so get along with him got it?” Jack walked away to speak with Zeller. Will picked at his forehead scabs, unsure why he was called all the way out here just for this.

“I never thought I’d really get to meet you Dr. Graham, this is such an honor,” Matthew extended a hand but retracted it, “sorry I forgot you hate skin contact. I’m just a bit star struck is all,”

“I’m not sure why, I’m like any other agent,” Will fixed his gaze on the young man’s nose. Appreciative that the young man didn’t force the contact, but a bit uneasy that he knew information about Will. Matthew snorted.

“Frankly sir, you’re the best thing that could ever happen to this desolate department,”

Will snuck a glance to this creature’s eyes and regretted it. Oh this guy was *crazy* crazy. Not on par with Hannibal, or anyone notorious, but worse than the usual power hungry psychopaths that filter through the FBI.

Worse because Matthew didn’t want power, or not the way psychopaths usually do. No, this freak was looking for understanding, acceptance, a place to enact his violent urges with a pat on the back and a job well done.

Why the hell did these guys always end up in Will’s class?

“One day I hope to be invaluable to the FBI as well, though I know I’ll never be as valuable as you are Dr. Graham,” Matthew continued, unaware of the sweat pooling on Will’s temples.

“I look forward to working with you Mr. Brown,” Will lied. Better to stroke a psychopath’s ego than try and knock any sense into them. The kid would just be running shit to the printer and getting coffee for Will, how bad could it be?

Matthew broke into a wide grin, “not as much as I look forward to working with you,”

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Randall tapped his foot restlessly in the waiting room. Predators such as himself could never feel comfortable in such a cage-like building.

Even though his natural instincts insisted his mother had betrayed him by sending him on this useless hunt, those were fears he quickly smothered within himself. The only impulse he refused to acknowledge was the impulse to hurt his family. His pack. The only things he had. .He loved his mother. He would not hurt his mother. He would not abandon his mother.

The office door opened and Randall shot to attention, not wanting to be caught in a vulnerable position by someone he viewed weaker than himself.

“Mr. Tier, it is so nice to meet you, please come in,” a voice floated across the room. Randall grumbled a complaint, unhappy that someone beneath him could order him around, until he entered the psychiatrist’s strike zone.

Broad shoulders encompassed half of the doorway, making it impossible for Randall to move into the office without brushing the doctor. Long, claw-like fingers gripped the doorway with imposing strength, as if the man could break it if urge struck him.

The worst was his eyes, bottomless in their intelligence and sharper than daggers. If Randall didn’t know better, didn’t trust his own power, he’d be shaking, like a rabbit with its neck snapped in a snare.

The pair were nearly the same height yet Randall felt like he was craning his neck up to the doctor just to make eye contact. Through and through, Randall was looking at an apex predator.

“Nice to meet you, my mother speaks highly of you,” Randall may be a predator in his own right, but wasn’t stupid enough to test his limits concerning the man in front of him . He would have to play this doctor’s game until their hour was up, pretend he didn’t see him, then he’d never grace the doorstep again.

“You may call me Dr. Lecter, or even Hannibal if you are comfortable,” Dr. Lecter smiled. Randall thought if people were stupid enough to call this man by his first name then they deserved to be his prey.

Randall had the desperate urge to cower and flee, but walked through the office door instead. Determined to prove he was no prey to this man. Better than a mortal human.

“Please get comfortable Mr. Tier, or would you prefer I call you Randall? Or perhaps another preferred name?” The beast mimicked human speech well. But so did Randall.

“Whichever you would prefer Sir,” Randall perched on the edge of the chair like a bird expecting to fly at the snap of a twig. He hated himself for it.

“Now Randall, your mother has presented me with some “problems” she is requesting be addressed before your 18th birthday, but I’d like to hear your own thoughts first,”

“20th,”

“I beg your pardon?”

“It’s my 20th birthday that’s coming up sir,” Randall slumped slightly, dejected at his mother’s misinformation. Dr. Lecter flipped through the pages on his clipboard.

“Oh my, I do apologize that I didn’t check for myself before our meeting. I do hope you’ll forgive my rudeness,”

“Nothing to apologize for, sir,” Randall cleared his throat and glanced at the clock. Forty five minutes to go.

“Do you have a prior engagement Randall? You’ve glanced at the clock three times,” Dr. Lecter chuckled, but Randall detected no humor in it.

“Just never had a good experience with therapy before. A little nervous,”

“Well let’s start with something simple. Your mother said you were struggling with some body dysmorphia? Can you explain it in detail?”

Randall bristled. His one moment of weakness with his mother, when the dam finally broke and he couldn’t hold his anguish in any longer, and she’d already spilled it to some nut job. In that moment he resented her more than anyone on this planet, including his own body (which was saying a lot).

“I wasn’t born as the wrong gender. I was born as the wrong species. I was born to hunt, to give into my impulses, to be a predator,” Randall cut to the bare naked truth. He waited for the laugh, the worried expression, the furrowed brow, the scoff of disbelief. All things his dad

had presented him when his mother had forced him to “come out”. Dr. Lecter did none of those things, in fact his eyes looked a little… fascinated.

“I see, are there reasons you believe you are the wrong species, or is it more of a physical feeling, such as a weight in your chest?” Dr. Lecter scribbled on a notepad. Randall blinked at the unexpected smoothness of conversation, but regained composure quickly, straightening his back to appear taller.

“I’ve always just known. I can’t relate to my fellow man, but an animal… it just feels right. Like that’s the way it was always supposed to be, but god fucked up along the way,”

Dr. Lecter hummed and continued writing.

“Yes god does have a funny way of doing that don’t they? What a wicked sense of humor they possess,”

“Yes, I’ve told my mother the same thing, though she didn’t share the same sentiment,” Randall relaxed a fraction more. There was understanding, finally someone didn’t chastise him for his honest beliefs. If he had a tail it’d be thrashing in excitement.

“Randall, I’d like to continue our sessions, if you would allow me to. Though I can’t dictate your life choices for you, it is my personal opinion that you’re not confused, I think you simply need guidance. Guidance on how to become your true self, a self your inner predator can live with,” Dr. Lecter stood and towered above Randall. That is when Randall realized what Hannibal was.

Not an apex predator, no, Hannibal was a god. A god that didn’t make mistakes.

Randall gazed up at his new savior with a slack jaw and a simple nod, not trusting himself to speak and break the spell. Finally, his ill fitting skin suit would stretch across horns and jagged fangs. Finally he’d be in a body that was his alone. That was *right.* All it had taken was one person believing him. One person to stretch a hand out and guide. What time he’d wasted until now, fretting and hoping for a savior, when one has been hibernating in the office five blocks from his house.

“Unfortunately, Randall, that is our hour. How does next Tuesday work for you?” Dr. Lecter prowled toward his desk to write in his calendar.

Randall nodded weakly, feeling like a baby blue bird that got swooped up by a hawk. He wasn’t sure if he was lunch or now under the predator’s wing.

“Randall?”

“Yes sir, that will work with my work schedule,” Tier choked out somehow. Dr. Lecter gave him a performative, polite smile.

“Good boy, now get home safe ok? Your parents really do worry about you,” Warmth radiated across Randall’s back as Dr. Lecter patted it. Randall realized now why wolf packs bore their throats to a common leader. There was something about submitting to a predator

even more cunning and vicious than yourself that was comforting in its own right. It lessened the burden Randall had no idea he'd been bearing.

"Yes sir, you as well,"

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Matthew tapped his foot restlessly in Will's passenger seat. Excitement bubbled in his chest, but somehow he contained the thousands of things he wanted to dump on Graham. He knew the agent wouldn't appreciate being chatty.

But goddamn Matthew was chatty.

"So you… been in the umm program? Been trying awhile?" Will scratched the back of his neck. Matthew felt the seams of his face rip into a grin.

"Yes sir! Or… no sir. It's only been a week since I've been accepted, but I've been trying since I was 18. I turned 21 not long ago," Matthew turned to openly stare at Dr. Graham, hoping for praise at entering the FBI at such a young age, "but I've been an admirer of your work much longer,"

"Matthew, let's get one thing straight," Will scowled. Or maybe that was his version of a smile. Right now it looked all the same to Matthew since he'd only ever seen Dr. Graham pissed.

"Yes sir, of course, anything you want,"

"This is a purely professional relationship. You seem like a straight forward guy so I'm gonna lay it out there,"

"Yes sir, I purely view this as professional," Matthew feigned aghast even though he knew Dr. Graham would see right through it.

"I'm talking no father figure shit either,"

"You're not even giving us a *chance,* " Matthew sagged in his chair. Will sighed, nearly growing gray hair by the second.

"Matthew…"

"All I'm saying is you would *love* me as a younger brother figure," Matthew pouted and crossed his arms.

"Promise me Matthew. Pure teacher assistant relationship. I swear to god if you follow me home I'm getting you kicked out of the program and hauled to jail," Will rolled his shoulders. Matthew, for once, cursed how utterly perceptive Dr. Graham could be. If Will would just give them a chance then he would see that Matthew was the chick beneath his wing, the ultimate successor. Successor for what Matthew had no idea but did that really matter in the long run?

“I promise that I’ll have a professional relationship with you,” Matthew spit between his teeth. Silently, he congratulated himself for using some open ended wording.

“You little—“ Will’s phone rang and he scowled at the name there, “this isn’t over you little shit,” he pointed to Matthew then clicked the answer button.

There was an accented voice speaking softly across the other line. Although Dr. Graham’s mouth set into a deeper frown, Matthew was amazed to see his shoulders relax. Will even began to comfortably drum his fingers on the wheel instead of turning them white with his previous grip.

“Really? A dinner party? Not really my thing,” Will said harshly. The accented voice must be dripping honey down the line, cause lines between Graham’s brows were melting, even his scowl turned into a light grimace. Then something utterly unexpected happened.

Dr. Graham *laughed.*

Now it was a subtle thing, one Matthew nearly missed, but it was there. A whoosh of air and a twinkle in Graham’s eyes.

“Ok, I’ll see but I’m not promising you shit Lecter,” Will ended the call. Immediately, his shoulders went rigid and his mouth fixed back to hard lines.

“You must like him,” Matthew blurted, slightly jealous. Jealous that someone made it look so *easy* to get on Dr. Graham’s good side. He had the vaguest urge to ask if they were fucking, but felt Dr. Graham might throw him out of the moving vehicle.

Will said nothing but Matthew saw horror etch across his face, like Will never considered that he could even like someone. Unable to help himself, Matthew added,

“Is that what your professional relationships look like Dr. Graham?”

Luckily, Matthew was a firm believer in seatbelts or his head would have crashed through the windshield when Will slammed the brakes.

And he’d definitely need that head when he found out *exactly* who “Lecter” was.

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Days passed with no leads in the case, though Hannibal had enjoyed having an excuse for Will to ask him for advice.

Hannibal welcomed his newest patient inside, already bored of the man.

First of all, Tobias Budge was arrogant. Arrogant enough to think he could take on Hannibal physically or mentally, arrogant enough to think he could *blackmail* the *Ripper* . Hannibal had nearly fallen over laughing when he received a hand delivered note threatening to expose him. The note was a bit old fashioned, just like Tobias’ stalking methods. Lecter had allowed him to catch him red handed, hoping for something interesting—maybe even surprising— to happen. But he was disappointed with a simple blackmail letter.

He would not show such manners in front of the man though. Tobias may be rude but Hannibal was not.

“Sit wherever you would like Mr. Budge,” Hannibal threw an open facepalm across the room.

“I think I’ll stand Doctor. Two predators shouldn’t disrespect each other by letting their guards down,”

“Very well,” Hannibal sat in his usual chair and took out a notebook, promptly ignoring the fuming Tobias.

“Dr. Lecter, let’s not pretend we don’t understand each other. It’s rare to find someone of our caliber among the common herd,”

Hannibal refrained from an uncourteous eye roll. There was that arrogance, assuming because Hannibal had allowed Tobias to catch him, that he had any upper hand. What had Will called people that displayed atrocious personality such as Tobias? Ah, *douche canoe.* What a colorful vocabulary that man possessed.

“Mr, Budge, I appreciate your professional business in the psychiatric capacity. That’s the *only* business I think we should participate in together,” Hannibal raised a brow, communicating the end of the conversation.

Tobias tried to hide ruffled feathers with a forced laugh, “Dr. Lecter, are you underestimating me?”

“I assure you Mr. Budge, I never felt the need to estimate your abilities at all. The orchestra and I have that in common,” Hannibal smoothed his midsection to hide his slight smile.

“I’ll make you eat those words,” Tobias grit his teeth and snarled. Hannibal cocked his head.

Not if I eat you first.

Although they had 20 minutes left in their session, Tobias exited the office with some rude, choice words about Hannibal and his practice.

Hannibal waved goodbye at him as he peeled from the parking lot. Quite satisfied with getting under Tobias’ skin in such a short amount of time. A new personal record. Now it was time to address another problem.

“You may come out now Mr. Tier,”

Hannibal watched the lithe man peel from the shadows, slightly amused at his disappearing act.

“Good evening Dr. Lecter,” Randall shifted his weight awkwardly. Obviously the boy was attempting to appear nonchalant, but his uncanny, animalistic instincts couldn’t relax around Hannibal.

Lucky for Randall he was quite polite.

And fun to make uncomfortable.

“Good evening Mr. Tier, is there a reason you’re haunting the halls of my practice?” Hannibal beckoned him inside. Tobias had been his last “patient”, though Randall had been hovering for hours. The wheels in Tier’s head went into maximum speed trying to think of a justifiable reason; the poor boy nearly had smoke coming out of his ears.

Hannibal shuffled the papers on his desk harshly. A signal of urgency if someone listening. Randall cleared his throat.

“I was wanting to move our session to earlier in the week, but didn’t want to be rude and interrupt your existing sessions. My apologies if it made you uncomfortable in any way,” Randall had known hovering close to Dr. Lecter would be risky.

Buzzards are largely ignored by their carnivore counterparts. Even though the predator did the hunting, the work, the pair get their fill side by side, to avoid wasting energy. Buzzards are so damn pesky and pick such little off the carcass that they’re allowed to survive off others.

Randall had hoped that’s how this “relationship” would play out. He’d watch Hannibal and consume as much information as possible, after digesting it, he’d be reborn as a predator. He’d be his true self.

Hannibal, due to his incredible power, would ignore Randall. As long as Randall didn’t trample his territory, didn’t infringe on any unspoken social quicksand, Hannibal would largely allow the scavenger to observe.

Or those were conclusions Hannibal could assume Randall had jumped to, by the way he sputtered out flowery excuses. As if the boy hadn’t thought for a moment his stalking would be acknowledged.

“I do recall giving you my booking email, did the link not work? I’ll need to fix that,” Hannibal stepped ever so closer to Randall. To his amusement, Tier did not take a step back, but his Adam’s apple did bob with nerves

“No sir, I just thought it more… polite to discuss something in person. I am very serious about my treatment,” Randall’s throat constricted the closer Hannibal got.

Ah, we’re dancing around the subject are we? Hannibal thought *Good thing I am a proficient dancer.*

“What exactly are you hoping to get out of your treatment Randall?”

“I hope to find myself,” Randall pulled his earlobe, “and people that I fit in with,”

“What does fitting in look like to you?” Hannibal knew it was a bit unprofessional to discuss these things outside of an official session, but it made the most delicious loopholes. Randall sighed.

“People that share my morals, my passions, my… urges,” Randall sat in the therapy chair with his head in his hands.

Hannibal circled Randall like a shark. Placing his hands on the back of the chair caused a rigid reaction to ripple across Randall’s back, but he remained seated.

The air hung like a blanket across the room.

“What are you willing to go through to be reborn Randall?”

“Anything,” Randall turned to stare up at Hannibal, too scared to stand.

Hannibal placed a solid hand on Randall’s shoulder, but before he could provide a response, his phone rang.

“I apologize Randall, I must take this,” Hannibal glanced at his phone and smiled.

Randall let out a breath he didn’t know he had been holding.

“What do I owe the pleasure, Dr. Graham?” Hannibal purred. His smile dropped.

Randall couldn’t believe the way Dr. Lecter went rigid, ready to strike, ready to pounce, ready to maim.

Whoever was on the other line, Hannibal must really like him.

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Will did not like this music shop.

It was decidingly evil. A snare. A trap. A lion’s den.

But this was the only lead in days, and the FBI had no idea if this music killer would strike again.

“I can open the door for you Dr. Graham. If you have an aversion to touching it,” Matthew bounced on his heels, practically waiting for a command. The two regular officers cocked their brows but didn’t embarrass Will with any comments.

Will didn’t satisfy him with an answer. Over these, grueling, *chatty* days, he’d found the silent treatment worked best with reprimanding Matthew. Cold air curled across his face as he opened the door, warning of the desolation to come.

“Good evening,” one of the officers went into his spiel over the chime of a bell. Will never trusted door bells or people that had them.

“Hello officers, I am finishing up a lesson shortly, and then I will be with you,” a smooth voice sailed. Will noticed in his peripheral Matthew took a step closer to him. Like an overprotective dog sensing a snake in the grass. Will rolled his eyes.

A deep cello vibrated the air as Will browsed the music books lining the wall. It was vaguely shaped like Hannibal's office, but only the same way a house cat is shaped like a lioness.

A shrill bellow snapped Will's focus outside. The elk.

"Matthew, follow me outside for a moment," Will attempted to keep his voice level. Matthew sprang to attention. This time Will would catch it. He'd have someone else there *to see* that thing and how it utterly haunted him. See that the elk was real.

The bell let out a high pitched whine as Will nearly knocked it off the door. He looked left and right. Nothing. He searched down an alleyway. Nothing. His breathing came faster and faster the less he found.

"What are we looking for Dr. Graham?" Matthew bounced behind him, just happy to be involved.

"I… I thought I heard a hurt dog," Will lied.

What is wrong with me?

"I'll find it sir!" Matthew slapped a hand to his chest in excitement. "Here boy," he whistled. Thinking for a moment he continued, "or girl,"

"Matthew no I— thank you , Matthew," Will figured this would keep the boy occupied while the officers questioned Tobias. While Will was thinking whether to bring up his hallucinations to Lecter, the bell rang, signaling the student leaving.

"Here boy… or girl… or puppy," Matthew continued with his tongue sticking out in concentration. For some reason the man was convinced the (nonexistent) dog was under the nearest dumpster. Will rubbed his eyes when a thud snagged his senses.

"Keep looking Matthew, but don't be sad if you can't find anything by the time we leave," Will couldn't place his finger on it, but he didn't want the trainee in the building. A vague *yes sir!* was drowned out by the bell as Will entered the building again.

A booted foot drenched in blood soiled the archway rug. Will drew his gun in silence, praying that Matthew didn't enter the building. Sweeping the house provided the other officer's body, strangled with his severed fingers beside him.

"A wire," Will thought as his eyes scanned the corpse. *Marshall* the name tag screamed, and Will knew he'd never forget the name for the rest of his life.

Silently, he continued his sweep until he saw an open door. The stairs descended into foreboding darkness. Will rolled his shoulders. *Of course* it's a creepy, dark basement.

Wil kept his gun drawn and took his phone out, eyes trained on the basement. Without looking he texted Jack

Will: 911. Ofcier Down. Music stop.

After the text went through Will dialed the only one his panic stricken mind could think of.

“What do I owe the pleasure, Dr. Graham?” Hannibal purred.

Will couldn’t choke the words out as he plunged into the darkness, desperate for a light switch. Hannibal’s leather chair squeaked under his weight, Will pictured the office now, pristine and safe.

“Will? Is everything ok?”

Intestines lined the walls, drying under oppressive heat lamps. Stale air and poignant chemicals burned his nostrils. Will coughed. A noticeable shuffle behind him.

“Thank you. For everything so far. I just needed to tell you. Just in case,”

“Will?”

Will ended the call as cold metal encircled his neck. He flung his head back, connecting the back of his head with facial bones. As the person sputtered, Will whipped the gun around to fire before the metal dug any closer to his neck artery.

Immediately, Will knew he didn’t connect bullet and brain, but graciously the metal slacked. Ears ringing, vision blurry from tears, he fired again. Water circled his feet which meant one thing.

Another missed shot. He squeezed the cut on his neck, it was shallow, he was thankful it didn’t have the chance to slice deeper. Creaking stairs and heavy footfalls confirmed Tobias was escaping. Will fell to his hands and knees.

His conscience begged him to run after the assailant, to not let him get where the public was, but the adrenaline was sucked out of him. Instincts lost to knowledge that his attacker had left, he was exhausted, wanting nothing more than to curl in a ball and not exist.

“Dr. Graham?!” Matthew bellowed, splitting Will’s head into a ferocious ache. The man came into his sight with hovering hands, unsure if he was allowed to touch Dr. Graham.

“Where… Tobias,” Will’s eye fluttered, needing to move before he fell asleep. He grabbed Matthew’s bicep and hoisted himself to his feet, knowing the work had just begun. Against his better judgment, Will gripped Matthew in a hug to support himself.

Being hugged right after a traumatic event didn’t hurt either.

“He walked right by me, he was so calm… I had… I had no idea,” Matthew supported Will by the shoulders respectfully.

“Not your fault,” Will said, finding strength ebbing back into his muscles. They walked toward the stairs as Will’s phone buzzed.

Jack: Calvary is coming.

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A knock on the door.

Hannibal shut his office lights off. When Will had delivered that ominous phone call, Hannibal had an idea of the events transpiring.

And he was *pissed.*

Now that Randall had finally been convinced to leave Lecter alone for the day, he could check on Will. Three calls had gone straight to voicemail.

Thankfully, Hannibal had shared Will's location while the man was passed out in the hospital. For an FBI agent the agent was not technology literate enough to realize it.

This is why the knock set Hannibal's teeth on edge.

"I do apologize but this office is closed for the day," He opened the door more aggressively than intended.

"My apologies, but you'll have to speak up. My ears are ringing from lessons today," Tobias Budge stood in the waiting room with a jacket dramatically draped over his arm.

"I'm leaving for the day," Hannibal remained in his doorway, sensing a buzz in the air which caused him to tread carefully.

"That is most unfortunate. I wanted to move our session to earlier in the week," Tobias loomed closer, a grimace in his face from some unknown pain.

Hannibal could have laughed at the attempt of intimidation if he'd had the time to waste. Something deep within his gut told him to entertain Tobias. Some instinct that it pertained to Will.

"I suppose I can squeeze one more session in," Hannibal beckoned him in, careful not to turn his back.

Just because Tobias was weaker than him did not mean Hannibal would let his guard down.

Tobias slithered in, but did not sit, never showing his own back to Hannibal. What a careful ballad they were playing.

"Let's cut the bullshit," Tobias lunged, steel wire bared like teeth as soon as Hannibal's door clicked shut. Tobias swung sporadically, just hardly catching Hannibal's arm. Hannibal allowed it all of course.

He would need some defensive wounds to make this story believable after all.

If Hannibal had to guess someone had damaged Tobias' middle ear, warping his sense of balance.

Once close enough, Hannibal used Tobias' own weight and balance injury against him. Leaning forward, Hannibal forced Tobias to stumble like a fawn on new legs.

Against his expectations, Tobias took his new ground stance to bowl into Hannibal's legs. They rolled for a while, desperately trying to get an advantage over the other.

The fight was a tense jumble of limbs for minutes that felt like hours.

A punch busted Hannibal's lip.

A kick bruised Tobias' ribs.

Tobias finally sat atop Hannibal, pressing his palms against the doctor's throat. Hannibal gripped his wrists, his fingers easily circling around the completely, and said,

"While I do enjoy being on bottom, I'm not sure this is appropriate for our current relationship," Hannibal coughed as the hold tightened.

"You *fucking smart ass!"* Tobias screamed, his face contorting in anger. After getting his well timed joke and defensive wounds in, Hannibal figured it high time to end this charade.

He allowed Tobias' grip to tighten for a moment as Hannibal let go of the man's wrists. One palm struck Tobias' neck, and one his solar plexus, like two vipers striking rats.

For a moment, Tobias balked down at Hannibal with bulging eyes. The next moment Hannibal flattened Tobias on his back and dragged him closer to Lecter's desk by the scruff of his cheap suit. Tobias squirmed and choked the entire way, unable to resist with lack of oxygen.

"No encore tonight I'm afraid," Hannibal lifted the elk statue over his head, lavishing in the crack of Tobias' skull as it connected. To calm himself before calling the police, he gazed at the skull shards. He loved the way that it broke apart, sprawling across the floor, as if in a desperate attempt to stay whole. Futile in the face of Hannibal's power.

How he loved shattering things.

"It is safe to come out now Randall,"

Randall slinked from the shadows of one of Hannibal's shelves, his face full of reverence.

"Please, let me learn from you," Randall said, kneeling in the midst of Tobias' gore. Hannibal smiled and cocked his head.

"I can only help those willing to help themselves. Those willing to forsake society by blending into it seamlessly," Hannibal knelt as well, careful not to touch his suit knees in the blood. He picked a piece of Tobias' brain from the statue.

Randall didn't move. He hardly breathed.

"Open your mouth,"

Randall opened.

Hannibal places the carnage into his mouth with a delicate touch.

Randall swallowed, reverent as a follower accepting communion. Hannibal smiled.

“Good boy. You have started the journey to become your true self. To become a wolf that resides among the flocks of sheep,”

“Thank you,” Randall whispered soft as a nun whispers to a rosary.

“Before you’ll find a community, you’ll meet many people who will never understand you. In those moments—whether they are days, weeks, months, or years—you must stay true to your goal. Are you prepared for that? Are you prepared to give up your comfort to be reborn?”

“Yes,” Randall pleased, “yes, anything,”

“Good. Keep me entertained and I’ll keep you off the menu,” Hannibal grinned, “Now let’s work on our alibi shall we?”

****

Will chewed his lip as the car raced down the highway. He denied any need for a medical examination once Jack had gotten the call alerting them that Tobias had been found and killed.

After receiving his own ominous call with no update on whether Hannibal was dead or alive, Will regretted his previous one. If Hannibal was alive the doctor would probably kill Will himself.

“Can’t you turn on the radio?” Matthew whined from the backseat.

“Remind me why the hell you tagged along?” Jack growled.

“You said I needed an assistant,” Will drummed his fingers along his knee. Cars parted across the road to make room for them, but it still felt like they were crawling across the miles.

Deep dread sat in Will’s stomach. It wasn’t at the fact that Hannibal might be dead. It was dread that Will *cared* whether Hannibal might be dead.

That feeling hadn’t coiled around his heart in a long time.

“Oh stop! I love this song,” Matthew grinned, fighting against his seatbelt to lean forward. Will turned.

“Matthew?”

“Yes Dr. Graham?”

“Shut the fuck up,”

“Yes Dr. Graham,”

Finally, after an eternity of red lights and squirming Matthew, they pulled into Lecter’s practice. Will calmly observed the swarming police officers with their hushed voices. Behind Jack he walked, preparing himself to see a corpse. Whether it be Lecter or Budge’s, Will would just have to see.

His shoulders slumped in relief when Hannibal’s tall shadow fell across the hardwoods, yawning to eclipse the group. Trepidation spiked his chest again at the realization of how fearful he’d been that Lecter could ever be out of his grasp. He yanked for Matthew to provide support, the last of his adrenaline gone now that Hannibal was right in front of him.

“Will,” Hannibal reached out instead, holding Will by the elbow. Matthew pouted, but knew when he was outmatched instinctively.

Will said nothing, simply leaned ever so slightly into Hannibal. Two fingers grazed the pulse point in Hannibal’s neck, and only once Will detected that bouncing proof of life, did he breathe with ease.

“If I didn’t know any better I’d think you’re happy I’m alive,” Hannibal teased, squeezing the feverish elbow in his palm.

“I prefer my friends alive,” Will said hoarsely.

Hannibal inspected Will with scrutiny, waiting for a joke to erupt, but Will had none. After realizing Will was being blunt without sarcasm, Hannibal melted.

He opened his mouth, then closed it without speaking, simply allowing a lapse of silence to comfortably surge between them. A silence that held many words.

“You always know just how to leave me speechless Will,”

*****

Matthew bounced on the balls of his feet, quietly observing the scene unfold. He’d underestimated how much Will actually did like this guy. Underestimated how dangerous this “Lecter” was. Hannibal looked at Will like a jackal looked at carrion.

Yeah, that guy could squash Matthew like a bug.

The red head previously being questioned by police slid into place beside Matthew. Well, “beside” wasn’t the right word. More like “this is the closest spot next to Will Graham without being close to that insane predator”.

“He was mine first,” Matthew scowled at the red head. Next to him, the man scoffed.

“Excuse me, Dr. Lecter doesn’t belong to anyone. Nobody could leash a predator like him,”

Now it was Matthew’s turn to scoff, “who cares about that old crone? I’m talking about Dr. Graham,”

“Who?”

“Excuse me? The special agent Dr. Will Graham! He’s renowned in his field—“

The man held up a hand, “Frankly, I’m not interested,” the man hesitated then added “well I’m just a tiny bit interested in anyone that could make Dr. Lecter look like *that* ,”

“That is because Dr. Graham has skills you can’t even comprehend,” Matthew straightened his stance a little, pleased to be speaking about his hero.

“Yeah, must have skills with this,” the red head pinched Matthew’s thigh, bordering on his ass. Matthew felt his mouth go agape like a fish out of water.

“Dr. Graham would *not* be a bottom! He is a service top at the very least but I assume him to be more as a dom,” Matthew nodded, as if his words were an obvious fact.

“First of all, just because someone has a nice ass doesn’t mean they’re a bottom. Me for example,” the man made an exaggerated motion to his backside, “Second of all, if Dr. Lecter is a bottom than he’s a power bottom,”

“I don’t know Lecter but I can tell in his eyes he’s a brat—“ Matthew nearly bit his tongue off as Will’s fist connected with the top of his head. The pair were so engrossed in conversation they hadn’t noticed their subjects of conversation approaching them.

“Matthew if you say another word, I’m reporting you for sexual harassment,” Will’s face was bright red with impossibly brighter ears.

“Do you have anything to say for yourself Randall?” Hannibal smirked, content to have continued to listen to their theories on his and Will’s nonexistent sexual life. Randall ducked his head and tucked his metaphorical tail between his legs.

“Sorry sir,” Randall shot Matthew a scowl, as if they were two high schoolers in the principal’s office.

Randall Matthew thought *I’ll have to remember that name to mess with him later.*

“Jack,” Will ground his palms into his eyes “take me home to my dog,”

Chapter End Notes

> Just to make this doubly clear, Randall/Matthew will never, in this fic, have any romantic feelings or situations between Hannibal/will. R/m see the murder husbands as more of someone to set them on the “path of righteousness”. Like god x follower obsession.

I hope y’all know I was STRESSED when I started this. I thought it would be too short because I’d be too excited and rush through it too fast to be slow burn enough. Now we’re like 35k words in and I’m like “Jesus Christ. When will I let them hold hands? When will they finally kiss. Or confess. This is torturous.” Then I remember IM the author and love to torture my readers and they [redacted] before they [redacted] and then they’ll finally [redacted]. Hope that helps!

Orchestra Aftermath

Chapter Summary

Will and Hannibal have a session <3
Will tells a lie.
Hannibal believes him.
<3 Nothing bad happens<3

Chapter Notes

My favorite part of Hannibal's character design is that he's so charismatic and charming and perfect that he can make cannibal jokes and very obviously manipulate people AND THEY JUST DONT SEE IT. THEY ARE BLINDED BY SOCIETY. BUT WHO SEES HIM? AN AUTISTIC EMPATH OUT CAST THAT DOESNT UNDERSTAND SOCIETY. I AM GOING CRAZY IN MY ENCLOSURE!!!

I have just been thinking about their dynamic so much lately.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal kneaded Will's thighs, his face comfortably sitting between them.

"Are you ready?" Hannibal said like a forlorn believer returning to their altar. Hushed. Desperate. Will was on his back, an unfathomable heat in his gut and silk soft sheets under his naked torso. He nodded. Hannibal grinned widely, too wide to be natural, but Will failed to notice as the monster leaned forward.

Their lips connected, their hands roamed, their lust grew. It was a lazy but consuming passion; a wildfire that slowly burned and scorched everything surrounding it. The real hunger stayed hidden behind their eyes as if they were scared to frighten the other. Scared to ruin the thin mood they'd captured like a wild beast.

Hannibal's mouth began to drift down, sucking flesh along the route toward a more erect goal. Nimble fingers unclasped buttons and zippers with heated concentration. Will arched slightly, ready to receive whatever Hannibal had planned for him.

Tobias looked at Will from the corner, a grimace painting the half of his head that was still there. Gore splattered the wall like an abstract painting. If one squinted their eyes, turned their heads, and looked long enough, it might even be in the shape of an elk. Much like the one in Hannibal's office.

“Hannibal, wait, d-do you see that too?” Will yelped and pointed. He attempted to sit up, but Hannibal pinned Will with his own body weight. Nimble fingers encircled Will’s neck as Hannibal kissed him harder, hungrier.

“Let me catch my breath,” Will braced his arm against Hannibal, but there was no way to straighten his elbow as Hannibal bit his lip harder than before.

“Pay attention to only me Will,” Hannibal tightened his grip slightly and resumed the aggressive affection. Will yanked his head away as breathing became difficult.

Behind Hannibal, Tobias began walking closer with a wire at the ready.

“H-Hannibal—“ Will tried, but everytime he tried to speak Hannibal devoured him again. Teeth butted together as Hannibal sucked too hard on Will’s tongue. To his unimaginable embarrassment, Will couldn’t help but arch slightly as the heat built more prominently at the other man’s touch.

Tobias secured the wire around Hannibal’s neck and began pulling. Blood seeped from the neck wound, cascading onto Will’s face and mingling in their kiss. Hannibal grunted, angry not at Tobias choking him, but that the force dragged him away, creating distance between himself and Will.

Will reached for the gun hidden in his nightstand, he knew he had to save Hannibal at all costs, he had to kill this threat, do anything for this man, but Hannibal gripped Will’s hand at the wrist.

“Don’t get distracted darling,” Hannibal choked, the wire beginning to cut into his vocal cords, “Keep your eyes on me Will. You have to choose me, you have to give it all up for me, see me for what I am and still choose me,”

“Hannibal, *please* ,” Will said. Tobias grimaced, his own face sliding off the skull since it was missing the necessary tendons. Hannibal merely licked the tears forming in the corner of Will’s eyes.

“Your wish is my command, my love,” Hannibal gargled, spitting more blood onto Will’s face. Lecter began rutting himself between Will’s thighs, hitting both of their erections.

“Not that sort of please you idiot! Kill Tobias *please* not make me cum *please,”* Will let his head slam into the pillow. That may be what Will said out loud, but his body was on autopilot, consumed with the pleasure. Will gritted his teeth, the heat boiling his insides.

“Will,” Hannibal kissed him gently across his bitten lips, “lift your head,”

Will obeyed. If any more friction took place on his overstimulated body, Will might go mad. Hannibal slipped a wire around Will’s flushed neck. His thumb ran over the pulse point, nipping at the adam’s apple.

“Is it going to be quick?” Will breathed, the space between Hannibal and his own lips feeling like an immeasurable casm.

“No,” Hannibal kissed him reverently as he tightened the wire. Will arched, nearly there….

Hannibal continued to tighten it until Will couldn’t breathe, until their wounds matched and their blood mingled on the bed, until there was no difference between their blood shared, until Will’s head disconnected from his spine in one feral slice.

Until Will came so hard he woke up.

Will blinked. His sweat soaked shirt had nearly come off the top of his head, effectively covering his face in its thin cotton grip. Winston cocked his head.

“You don’t want to know,” Will moaned into his hands, too afraid to look in his boxers. He stripped the sheets and peeled his remaining clothes off. The past months with Lecter had provided wet dreams, especially after the comfort of time spent in the hospital together after Angel Maker. Never had blood been involved. Never had it been so passionate as that. Never had he actually come without outside stimulation, but the dreams themselves had become more frequent the more sessions they shared.

Freezing cold shower water brought him clarity.

Clarity that he was royally and utterly fucked.

“I had a wet dream about my therapist and the guy he murdered,” Will said into the mirror, “I dreamed he killed me. I dreamed I liked it,”

Self defense! His brain supplied, but the words felt slippery and uneven when it came to Hannibal. Will had walked the office floor several times since it had emptied with Lecter on a reasonable (and forced) sabbatical.

The evidence said self defense. The alibis were airtight. Will’s brain screamed *staged!* Though he couldn’t place his finger on why, and hadn’t wanted to, considering the implications.

Will slid to the floor, shivering slightly from how cold the shower was. Winston assumed it was time for their daily play and joined him.

“I can’t go to the session today. I don’t care how rude it is, no way I can see him after that. Oh god, what if he asks about my nightmares?”

Winston barked, nudging the toy closer. Sometimes Winston’s friend needed reminding, sometimes he would stare into space for hours, until Winston nudged him with a cold nose. So Winston nudged him now, hoping it was time to play.

“Oh no Dr. Lecter, my nightmares are gone, I just dreamed you sucked me off and then choked me to death! All normal here!” Will shrieked. Winston huffed and walked away, realizing that Will was fine, but not willing to play.

Will crawled to the nightstand, hoping to see missed calls from Jack. There had to be an emergency somewhere.

No notifications.

“Funny that the Ripper never kills people when I need to get out of a session,” Will leaned his forehead onto his bare mattress. He ignored the nerves bubbling his gut and shot a text to Lecter.

Will: sure you’re ok to resume sessions already? only been a month.

As soon as Will placed his phone down, it chimed.

Dr. Lecter: I’m more than ready Will. This month has been a bit stifling without our conversations. Is everything ok?

Will cursed Hannibal’s recovery time. Why couldn’t this therapist be normal and mentally scarred from the encounter? Will scratched the back of his neck and chastised his own thinking. Really, he was happy Dr. Lecter was ok, just wished his dream had picked another day to happen.

Will: fine. be there at 3.

He scratched Winston lovingly. Maybe if he could sap the young dog’s courage through his fur it would add strength back to Will’s legs.

Eventually, Will hoisted himself to his feet and dressed warmly.

Wind cut into his face as he opened the door, allowing Winston fresh air and a romp in the outside before leaving for the day.

The elk bayed from the tree line. Will ignored it.

The creature pawed the ground, desperately, methodically, begging for Will’s attention.

Winston chased the ball. Will threw it. Winston gave him the ball. Will threw it. Winston didn’t notice the elk. Will pretended he didn’t.

If Will hadn’t been so shaken by the dream, he might have confronted the elk. He might have seen that it was spewing blood into the snow. That there was an arrow sticking out of its side. Maybe if he hadn’t had the dream about Hannibal, the elk wouldn’t have appeared at all.

Luckily, Jack had deemed Will’s “conversations” with Hannibal once a week as worthy of day’s off, so Will leisurely made the boring drive over. His phone chimed.

Dr. Lecter: I made lunch, don’t eat before coming over.

Will sent a thumbs up as reply and scratched his neck. Too hard, it broke the neck scab from Tobias’ wire apart. He sighed and rubbed the blood on his jeans. This was going to be a painful session.

***

Hannibal tapped his finger impatiently against his desk. He'd never been an impatient man. In fact he enjoyed the chase, the hunt, the agonizing wait, more than anyone. Well he *had* until Will Graham.

He tapped his finger impatiently, the clock read 2:55PM. No, he couldn't seem desperate. He needed to wait until 3:00 to check the lobby. Neediness scared Will. He must wait.

2:56PM.

It had been an entire month since their last session, Will *insisting* Hannibal do no work while "recovering". Hannibal scoffed. Tobias was an ant bite, not something he needed time for. The deep gash on his arm, busted lip, and black eye had not instilled confidence in the special agent. After Hannibal *insisted* this was just a friend talking with a friend, not strenuous or work related, Will had blocked his phone number.

2:57PM

After giving the man space for a week, Hannibal began doing his other type of work, the kind sure to attract Will's attention. He wanted this sounder to throw the FBI from his trail, the other ones too close to his real message meant specifically for Graham. Freddie had thrown up some annoying, but accurate, flags that the Ripper couldn't keep hoisting if he wanted to keep food on the table. So the bodies weren't displayed as of now.

Finally, at the two week mark, Hannibal couldn't stand the silence from Will. He'd shown up and watched Will teach. Unfortunately, the man seemed to be doing just fine without Hannibal, even though they had missed two sessions.

Although, watching Will work was a treat in itself. Usually, Will folded into himself like origami, scared to take up more space than needed. In a classroom, he could spread his wings, there was command, confidence, and authority, though the teacher still avoided any student's eyes. This is how Hannibal caught him by surprise after class. Briefly, he had considered leaving with Will none the wiser of his presence.

Unfortunately, that strategy no longer satisfied the ravenous hunger Hannibal always felt for the man. Desperately, he sought Will's attention like a drug addict after his fix. He sought the beaming smile rarely witnessed, the tender touch hardly given except to those Will deemed worthy.

Hannibal would prove he was worthy. Any means necessary.

"I had no idea you were such a well spoken instructor," Hannibal lied. He had snuck into these teachings before now.

"First of all, you've been in my classroom before now. Second of all, you're supposed to be home. Recovering," Will said while shuffling papers. His voice had a hoarse edge to it from the previous scrap with Tobias. The agent didn't even look at Hannibal as he began grading papers.

“How can you accuse me of attending before when you don’t look at your audience?” Hannibal cocked his head, ever starving for the stimulation Will gave him. Will scoffed.

“That doesn’t mean I don’t know what is going on around me. Besides, your presence is not something people simply *ignore* and-- wait don’t dodge the recovery question! Go home Hannibal,” Will made a shooing movement.

“Unblock me and I will,” Hannibal ran his fingers over the desk, inching it closer to Will.

“No, if I unblock you then you’re just going to badger me into letting you work earlier than you need to. I am not your mother Hannibal, go back to work if you want, but you won’t be seeing me until I think you’ve had time,”

“You are at work,” Hannibal’s fingers were nearly there, nearly brushing Will’s own.

“I didn’t fight him in hand to hand combat and kill him,” Will winced at his own blunt words and placed his grading pen down. He clasped his hands together, effectively ruining Hannibal’s hunt as their hands grew in distance from each other. Hannibal had been quite looking forward to some skin to skin contact, but patience was a virtue.

“I merely defended myself. I am not ashamed of that,”

“You shouldn’t be ashamed,” Will said hurriedly, “If it was between you and a serial killer of course you should do whatever is required to live, but that doesn’t mean it isn’t hard for your mind to cope with ending someone’s life,”

Sometimes it was beneficial that dear Will hated looking at people. If he had been looking at Hannibal, he would have seen the doctor try not to laugh.

“I assure you Will, I know my limits and can cope on my own. It is my job,”

Oops, misstep. Will’s frown set into a hard line.

“Then go have fun at your job. Without me. I won’t worry about you or your perfect little mind anymore,”

“I appreciate your concern, but I do have my own therapists I see regularly. Though your concern means more than anyone else’s fake pity to me, but I would like to assure my only friend that he does not need to needlessly worry about me,” Hannibal tapped the end of his nail on Will’s knuckle. Minimum contact, but enough to make Will purse his lips.

“I am not your only friend,”

“You are in the ways it matters. I have never shared myself with someone more than I have with you. You are the only one I could never get tired of,” Hannibal tapped Will’s knuckle sporadically.

Believe me, choose me, love me if one knew morse code fast enough to keep up.

“Fine. I will believe you. But I am not resuming sessions until the one month mark. The more you try to convince me, the longer my hiatus is,” Will tapped Hannibal’s own knuckles sternly in three quick taps, dismissing the conversation.

The threat of Hannibal revoking his rubber stamp for FBI clearance stifled the air between them, but Hannibal had no intention of using that bargaining chip yet. Not only would Will shut himself off to Hannibal, but Hannibal loved this push and pull. This courting dance.

2:58PM

After three weeks and the classroom visit, Will agreed to unblock Hannibal. Hannibal never assumed influencing Will in any capacity would be easy. He actually savored the fact, but the man was more unrelenting than anything Hannibal had ever pursued. If he wasn’t careful, he might even choke on the lavish meal Will promised to be.

2:59 PM

Hannibal hovered over the door, ready to open it as soon as the clock allowed it. Even through the door, he could smell that disgusting aftershave, that incredible mind, the temptress of a body.

Will must know Hannibal better than he thought, after assisting with Will’s after hospital care, he had hunted for that aftershave like his identity of the Ripper depended on it.

Foiled, Will must have hidden it in preparation of their arrival. The man was such a tease. Hannibal left a lavish aftershave to replace it anyways.

Will had yet to use it.

3:00pm

“Will, good afternoon, are you hungry?” Hannibal opened the door. Will stopped biting his nails and looked up at Lecter from the waiting room chair. His cheeks were lightly dusted pink from the cold offsetting the attractiveness of his dark hair. Aphrodite themself could not paint a better picture.

“I can always eat if you’re cooking,” Will snatched his jacket from the chair and walked through the open office door. Hannibal noted Will was extra careful not to brush against him. Hannibal racked his brain attempting to see why Will would revert back to his aversion to touch, but no offense came to mind.

Will plopped into his usual chair, tapping his fingers against his knee in nervousness. Hannibal smiled, no matter, he had Will for the next uninterrupted hour. He would find out what was bothering the man.

Rooting around that mind was his greatest pleasure in life at the moment.

“A little late for lunch don’t ya think?” Will cleared his throat, small talk never his speciality, though Hannibal found it an endearing quality.

“I was just excited to see my friend so I wanted to cook for him,” Hannibal placed a warm dish in front of Will. Bless the man, he didn’t even ask what it was before beginning to devour it.

“You sure are milking that whole friend title,” Will grunted between mouths of red potato. Though his face betrayed him with a slight redness covering the back of his neck.

“Is it incorrect to be happy that someone considers you a friend?” Hannibal lifted the tightly packed sausage to his teeth, relishing in the way it popped and burst.

Interesting that Will always ate the sides first, Hannibal observed. Whether it was some primal instinct that the meat was human, or his own sensory peculiarities, Hannibal was unsure (and would find out). Will lifted the sausage to his teeth, ripping the casing and closing his eyes from the flavor.

“Did you make this from scratch or something? I think it’s one of my favorites,” Will dodged the friend topic. Hannibal allowed it.

“Yes, they were an especially rude pig, or so I am told by the butcher I acquired the meat from,”

The chase had been boring. Usually, Hannibal would never forget the slight someone had offered him, especially if it was so present enough for him to kill over. Yet right now, with Will in front of him devouring something Hannibal had slaughtered, butchered, seasoned, packed, and displayed, no he couldn’t think about that disrespectful pig at all.

Will chuckled and tore another piece apart.

“Well I’m glad if any of them had to be eaten, the rude one got eaten,”

Hannibal smiled, more hungry to watch Will eat then he was for the actual food.

“I am happy to know that is a subject we agree on,”

After the meal, Hannibal reclined in his chair contentedly. If only things could remain like this at all times. Will with his full attention on Hannibal, his stomach full of whatever Hannibal fed him, his mind full of thoughts toward Hannibal. Consumption wasn’t just cannibalism, Hannibal wanted to consume Will in every way possible, mind, body, soul.

And Hannibal wanted to just plain eat him too.

“Matthew keeps talking about hawks and flying together and shit. God the way he clucks at me I would say he is more of a chicken,” Will ranted while Hannibal imagined him basted in a honey reduction.

“Will, how are your nightmares? Any more waking hallucinations?” Hannibal found catching Will totally off guard was the easiest way to get the truth out of the quick witted man.

“Nope, no dreams or nightmares of any kind. I mean in fact I don’t think I will ever have a dream of any kind ever again,” Will nodded continuously. He had replied fast, as if expecting

the question.

“Will, I can’t help if you don’t tell me the truth,”

“Actually, it looks like that is our hour,” Will clapped and stood. Hannibal leaned forward.

“Will, it’s only been 30 minutes,”

“It’s 4pm Hannibal,”

“Oh? Our meal didn’t count toward the session. That was breaking bread with a friend,”

Will licked his lips, as if tasting the defeat in the air. Hannibal held an open face palm toward the chair.

“You tricked me,” Will squinted, but took his seat. Hannibal feigned offense.

“Will, I would never intentionally lead you on the wrong path,”

“The dreams are fine. Elk shows up sometimes, but never when I’m awake,”

Hannibal knew Will was hiding something.

“What were the good dreams you mentioned last time? We ran out of time before we could discuss it,” *Please be of me, dream of me Will, think of me like I think of you.*

Will went rigid in his seat.

“They’re of… Winston… yeah Winston and I playing. You know fetch,” Will rolled his shoulders, a sure tell he was uncomfortable.

“I am glad your dreams are stabilizing as your mind is recovering,” Hannibal smoothed the midsection of his suit, a sure tell he was trying to hide annoyance.

Both the men mentally circled the other attempting to outsmart.

Will sighed and scratched the back of his neck.

“I… also had a dream about someone I … might be attracted to,” Will turned brighter after each word.

Hannibal gripped the side of his chair, this was the killing blow his hunt had been leading to. A confession.

“Oh? Who would that be,” Hannibal said a bit too breathily.

Will blinked several times, rolled his shoulders, tapped his knee.

“…Alana. Umm yeah, Alana Bloom actually. Though I doubt she would return any feelings,”

Hannibal’s world shattered. He opened his mouth, closed it, recovered, and opened it again.

“Yes, she is a beautiful, kind woman,” Hannibal smiled like he’d just taken a bite of McDonald’s.

“Oh, yeah, I suppose she is,” Will slumped as if relieved to have let out a deep secret. Hannibal cleared his throat, not accustomed to walking on this unlevel ground. Not accustomed to predicting a situation’s course so incorrectly.

“I do believe that is unfortunately our hour,”

Alana Bloom must die

“Wow, that last 30 minutes flew by,” Will scratched the back of his neck, dared flash his delicate dimple up to Hannibal. A forbidden fruit shining in the afternoon sun, hanging on a low branch to tempt passerby.

Will Graham will eat Alana Bloom

“Can I still expect you at my dinner party this Sunday?” Hannibal gripped the door, daring it to splinter under his fingers. He needed to break something. God he wanted to break the man in front of him.

Will smiled one of his rare ones. One that showed his canines.

“As long as I can bring a plus one. Beverly would never forgive me if I went to one of your dinner parties without her,”

Another smile not meant for Hannibal.

“Of course. Little uncle Jack and Alana will also be there,”

Will’s smile dissipated.

“Why will they be there?”

“They were invited,” Hannibal quipped and closed his office door, afraid if they spoke one more moment his person suit would fall apart.

Will’s scent lingered a moment longer behind the door, then drifted away. Hannibal watched Will drive away.

His office door locked, Hannibal took their glass dishes and dropped them to the ground. Soon Lecter would need to buy new glassware, if dear Will kept throwing such curveballs.

Even when the glass was pulverized beneath the soles of his shoes, even when he’d swept up his mess, even when he calmly began to draw (and imagine what Alana could be paired with), an inferno bubbled in his gut.

Never had he felt this flavor of rage and jealousy Will had bestowed upon him. One that not even destruction could quell.

His pencil punctured through the parchment. Too much pressure tore the portrait he'd been working on for weeks now. Right on the shadowing of the subject's dimple.

Chapter End Notes

Guys do not fret. This is a spoiler but I would want to know if I were you, this little lie about Alana from Will will be resolved next chapter at the dinner party. I hate misunderstanding tropes, but the idea of this small lie made me laugh so hard. Like I was rolling around on my bed thinking about Hannibal throwing a hissy fit. Why would Will tell that lie?? Why would Hannibal BELIEVE him?? This IS SO ROM COM LOGIC! But don't worry. Next chapter will resolve it… in a way I think you'll all like. MUAHHAHAHA

Also… this is an Alana hate free zone. I love her character, I love her and I agree with most the decisions she made, but for this fic she is NOT a focus so she gets side piece treatment. So sorry my baby gorl Bloom💔

Dinner Party

Chapter Summary

Dinner party !!!!! I have been WAITING TO WRITE THIS SO BAD. BUT I DIDNT WANNA RUSH IT IM EXCITED *breakdances* (that's why it's 8K words. I needed to give y'all BOTH PERSPECTIVES I JUST HAD TO!!!!) *does a backflip*

Chapter Notes

This chapter might seem a little OOC for Will in the beginning. But I do have to remind you all… Will is genuinely as crazy (maybe even more crazy) than Hannibal in the canon. He has always had dark urges. He has always manipulated people to do what he wants. He just has a different person suit than Hannibal does.

The series will probably dive into that a lot more going forward. I really like dark Will. I like his internal struggle with himself and what he's capable of.

I hope this chapter highlights you how unreliable Will and Hannibal are at narrating.

I hope you enjoy it

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will held the aftershave in his hand, a great weight in his palm and his chest at the thought of using it. Of course he had noticed it the moment Hannibal placed it there, a stark contrast to the other cheap products. Like the man who gifted it, the bottle was ornate. Something unable to be ignored among Will's routine life, as if the blood red bottle itself stole color from the outside world, making everything surrounding it ashen and gray.

Will suspected that feeling had nothing to do with the bottle.

"Will? You ready?" Beverly knocked on the bathroom door.

"Yeah, one second," Will clutched the glass, dotted it on his neck, temples, and wrists. Places Hannibal could detect it. Blushing, he placed dots on his hip bones as well.

Just in case.

God he was already sweating.

Beverly was in her royal blue evening gown, matching his wrinkled shirt, when he exited the bathroom. He smiled at her fussing over her hair in the mirror of his room. Will wondered if she ever realized how much he cared for her. How badly he had the urge to sink his teeth into her or hold her entire being in the palm of his hands.

“Jesus Christ! You scared the shit out of me. Why are you just standing in the doorway watching me like that?” Beverly dropped the earring she had been trying to put in.

Will picked it up and placed it in her awaiting palm. Her reaction made him smile, reminding Will of his childhood. Up and down Will’s father, Franklin, swore to all his friends that his child was a ghost, silently haunting the halls, just watching life happen as if the kid was not alive himself to experience it.

After Will practiced moving more silently, his father began locking the bedroom door every night. The man attested to Will (as if he owed Will an explanation) that he was unable to sleep knowing there may be a chance his son was hiding, waiting until Franklin fell unconscious to slink out and stare.

Finally, after a week of Will wiggling the lock all night, Franklin broke and allowed Will to sleep beside him whenever the boy wished. The old boat mechanic said it was much scarier hearing his door handle jiggle all night then knowing Will was in the shadows. His father got used to Will’s presence.

As most people did when Will persisted.

“Just observing,”

“I wish everyone at work knew what an uncanny valley little creep you are,” Beverly said, lightly punching Will in the shoulder to prove she wasn’t actually angry.

“I think they do, that’s most likely why you’re the only person I can stand in the entirety of the FBI. Or that can stand me,” Will squeezed her elbow. Something nasty was pulsating under his skin, coiling like a snake ready to strike. He couldn’t pinpoint what the snake was craving to constrict.

“Is everything ok lately?” Beverly asks in her im-trying-not-to-show-I’m-worried-because-it-makes-you-clam-up voice, “you’ve been different,”

Will cocks his head, inquisitive of her meaning. Beverly sighs but elaborates,

“Since the hospital. Since Tobias. A lot has happened in a short time so I thought you’d be a bit distant. I thought I’d have to fight tooth and nail to keep you present. If anything you seem more—“ Beverly flailed her hands ”—yourself than you’ve been in awhile,”

“Oh. Sorry,” Will flexed his hands at his sides, burning with the need to grab something. He wasn’t sure what he wanted to grip. He wasn’t sure why he apologized.

“No Will, I’m sorry. I like you anyway you’re packaged. I just wish… I wish I could have been the one to help you out of it all. Or at least noticed you were doing as bad as you were,”

Beverly swallowed and picked at her nails.

Oh.

Will's shoulders untensed. He smiled. For someone so astute at reading people, he overlooked the simplest of explanations sometimes.

"I'm pretty good at masking. To your defense," Will held his arm out for Beverly to link with. The knot of guilt unwound itself from Beverly's stomach as she took Will's arm in her own. Unbelieving how much more contact he was allowing her, she didn't waste a moment with hesitation, less the spell be broken.

Will made a mental note to watch out for signs of her guilt again. Beverly was prone to it, despite her usual appearance of nonchalance.

"Sometimes a little too good," Beverly squeezed his arm as they walked to his car.

Will opened the car door for her. Often he wondered if she ever saw his complete, true creature inside would she still look at him tenderly. Would she still allow him to braid her hair in those abhorrent knots? Would she still be his plus one to sticky social situations? Would they still sync their lunch breaks? Would they still have their trashy movie nights? The ones where they burst with greasy pizza and whisky. The ones where they bubble with laughter.

No he couldn't quite give those up. He wouldn't.

He squeezed her shoulder as she sat down.

Will didn't like the thought of being dependent on someone. Usually as soon as that happened they were taken from him, and he had to prove all over again that he was self-sufficient.

No, he reminded himself, Will wasn't *dependent* on Beverly. She was like a child's safety blanket, a background comfort on his best days (and an absolute need on his worst days). Something he always wanted with him no matter how much he grew as a person.

"Buckle your seatbelt Will," Beverly chastised as Will drove from the long, winding driveway.

"Yes mom,"

Once the drive was half over, stretched in comfortable silence, Beverly scrunched her nose and dropped her phone into her own lap.

"Oh my god. Are you wearing *nice* cologne?" Beverly shook Will's shoulder. Will pursed his lips. Nevermind, no baby blanket would annoy him this much.

"It was a gift," Will attempted to leave it, knowing Beverly would never let a bomb like that lay there without detonating it.

“Oh Will, no one in our immediate circle has good enough taste to give you a good gift,” Beverly smirked, “Though, I suppose a new addition comes to mind,”

Will set his mouth in a hard line. Beverly poked his side, forever the instigator.

“You like him~” she drew out, poking and pinching him like a middle school bully.

“No sense in a gift going to waste,” Will muttered, slapping her hand away.

“Funny, I haven’t smelled it on you until now. Did you save it for his party?”

Will reddened. Maybe this little plan wasn’t as discreet as he had hoped it would be.

“Oh my *god* are you serious? Are you fucking confess— *“*

“Beverly! Look at that we’re here! Free food. Get out of my car,” Will seethed, already embarrassed before the social situation even started. This was not a great start.

Beverly smirked but blessedly left Will’s sore spots alone. They rejoined arms up to Hannibal’s door, Will souring slightly when he noticed Beverly was taller than him with her fancy new heels on. Suddenly his button down shirt and khakis pants felt like he was naked, but at the same time constricted him into sweats.

“Is my hair ok?” Will gnawed his lip between his teeth. Beverly ruffled it then patted his back.

“It is now,”

Will rang the doorbell with a pout. He thought the gel look would have been a winner. All the spit in his mouth dried as Hannibal opened the door.

As always, the man was a picture of crisp neatness, not a wrinkle or sweat stain in sight, though Will imagined he’d been cooking all day.

“Ah, our last two guests,” Hannibal leaned closer, “arguably the two most important,” He whispered as he kissed Beverly’s extended hand.

“I bet you say that to everyone that graces your door Dr. Lecter,” Beverly snorted, playing the part of a posh member of society. Hannibal quirked a brow and hummed.

“Yes Miss Kantz, but sometimes I actually mean it,”

Will shifted his stance and rolled his shoulders. The banter was enjoyable, the thought of meeting new people as soon as he went inside was not. Hannibal’s eyes darted to Will, obviously wanting to acknowledge him, but unsure how.

That small side eye took Will by surprise. If anyone knew how to start a conversation it would be Lecter. Why the sudden hesitation?

“Will, allow me to take your coat,” Hannibal placed his fingers in the collar, brushing the sensitive skin of Will’s neck.

“I’ll go greet everyone,” Beverly winked and sauntered off to socialize (Will knew it was actually to get plastered). Will could strangle her in that moment if his arms were free.

The jacket nearly past his elbows, Hannibal stopped. A beat of awkward silence as Will waited for Hannibal to continue. Will shimmied his arms the rest of the way out when Hannibal didn’t, turning to say,

“Everything ok?”

Hannibal clutched Will’s jacket with his mouth set in a hard line, nostrils flared.

He looked *pissed.*

“Everything is fine Will, let us join the rest of our company. I’m sure Alana will be excited to see you’ve arrived,” Hannibal grimaced, gliding past Will to lead the way.

It caused Hannibal to miss Will’s crooked smile.

Hannibal Lecter was *jealous.*

Warmth slithered like a snake under his skin, sated and soothed, burrowing for winter.

Maybe this evening would be fun after all.

Like a cat slinking toward a canary, Will followed Hannibal to the outlandishly decorated foyer filled with stuck up people Will didn’t want to speak with. They all looked like they’d just left the local opera showing, and acted like Hannibal had been the one to perform a one man solo show.

A thought buzzed in Will’s head, pesky as a fly, when he saw the choice of decor. Bones and mounted antlers spiraled through the walls in delicate displays, paired with appropriate blooming flowers and tasteful ornaments. What a weird choice of furnishings.

But Will had never claimed to understand the rich.

“Will, I can’t believe you came,” Alana’s voice drags Will away from his musings.

“Couldn’t let Beverly drive herself. You know how she loves wine,” Will smiled, not because of whom he was talking to, but because of the subject.

“That she does,” Alana laughed, inching closer to his shoulder. Desperately, he attempted to reel in his facial expressions, but his nose scrunched anyways.

The pair had played this push and pull game before, usually Alana was the one to pull away, claiming friendship or professionalism was the intent of her interest. She’d also gotten drunk once and cried to Beverly that she thought she might be a lesbian.

He took a slight step back, hoping Alana wouldn't notice. She was a trained, highly sought after psychologist, so of course she noticed, her face falling slightly. Will cleared his throat about to give a half hearted apology, but that was the moment Hannibal decided to announce dinner was ready.

The high maintenance prick that he was, Hannibal had assigned seating with place cards.

Will was relieved to see Beverly sit to his left. Floored to see Hannibal to his right at the head of the table. Apparently he wasn't the only one surprised if the light rumbling filling the room was any indicator. Will rolled his shoulders, not a fan of being the center of attention.

The first course was served, a lobster risotto with Parmesan. Will watched each guest carefully, waiting until Hannibal took a bite before trying it himself. Somehow eating with in that order felt safest.

"Holy shit. This is fucking awesome," Will closed his eyes around the bite, velvety risotto mingling beautifully with buttery, rich lobster.

Silence blanketed the room until Will opened his eyes. Everyone was staring at him like he'd just dumped the risotto on Beverly's head (as if he'd ever let the dish go to waste like that). Shrugging off their stare with a roll of the shoulders, Will shoved more into his mouth.

"Thank you Will," Hannibal smiled softly, melting some tension from both of their frames. He quietly continued eating, careful not to scrape his fork against the glassware.

A cacophony of voices made Will flinch, everyone suddenly emboldened by Hannibal's reaction to Will's simple bluntness. Though they used words Will had only read in Shakespearean sonnets.

"Thank you for your kind regards," Hannibal wiped his mouth with a cloth napkin, "is everyone ready for the next course?"

Lamb was delicately placed in front of him, drizzled in a red sauce Will tuned out as Hannibal explained it to the party. While they were charmed, hanging on Hannibal's every word of explanation, Will stuffed his mouth.

Beverly tapped Will's thigh twice in sharp succession. They developed this secret code for Will missing social cues after a disastrous FBI banquet that dared give Will an award that required a speech on stage. For reasons Will still couldn't grasp they never asked him for a speech again. Will raised his eyebrows at Beverly, awaiting an explanation.

"Hannibal worked hard on these dishes. It might be polite to at least pretend to listen to his monologues," Beverly whispered with a smile, happily cutting into her lamb and swirling it in the sauce. Will swallowed the last bite of lamb roughly, heat flushing his cheeks.

At the other end of the table Alana and Jack spoke quietly to one another, also just beginning to dissect their lamb. Will wondered if everyone was on the same page except him. He wandered if he was even reading the same book.

“Could hardly finish it,” Will jabbed at Hannibal’s direction, cursing his inability for small talk with the unfortunate exception of sarcasm. He took a gulp of wine, wishing it was harder liquor.

Hannibal breathed through his nose sharply, as if holding back a laugh. Will tapped his nail roughly against the table, unwilling to risk eye contact with anyone at the table.

The next dishes were stranger and stranger, though Will was the only one that appeared hesitant. Various animal kidneys, livers, and hearts diced to symmetrical shapes, paired with unique vegetables and wine. Will attempted to listen to all of Hannibal’s lengthy explanations, only sneaking bites when he was sure the man wouldn’t notice. Finally, dessert was served. Airy whipped cream and homeade ice cream paired with sweet berry compote. Will licked juice sneakily off his thumb, his face turning red when the digit left his mouth with a pop. He hadn’t meant to do that. Luckily no one seemed to notice.

After the dishes were cleared away everyone haunted to the foyer again, floating like ghosts stuck in a small talk limbo. Food churned in Will’s stomach as he nursed his drink beside Beverly charming everyone around her. Will was quite content to spend the evening like this, a shadow in his friend’s personality, observing the party.

“I feel a bit out of place,” Alana materialized beside him, nearly making him drop his glass. Will had been so focused on watching Hannibal mingle with a group of four he hadn’t noticed her approach.

“Yeah, rich pansies can do that to you,” Will grumbled.

“Do you think she’s beautiful?”

“Huh?”

“The red head,” Alana blushed, “the woman Hannibal is speaking with. You’ve been staring in that direction for awhile,”

“Oh? Right, yes she’s beautiful,” Will said noncommittal.

“Yeah, she really is,” Alana spoke breathily, swirling her wine. Will blinked in rare realization.

“You should go talk to her. Like right now,”

“What? No. No way. What would we even talk about?” Alana sputtered, tucking her hair behind her ear. Will held his arm out.

“I guess you won’t know until you start talking,”

Alana glanced between the woman and Will’s arm, tapping the wine glass with her press ons. She relented and linked arms with Will, steered toward the group.

“Mind if I borrow him? I can trade you for some better company,” Will cut into the lull of the woman and Hannibal’s conversation, placing his free hand on the small of Hannibal’s back.

The woman ignored Will and smiled at Alana.

“Margot. Margot Verger,” Margot shook Alana’s hand. Alana blinked several times. Margot smirked, “may I have the pleasure of your own name?”

“Alana Bloom,

“Beautiful, like it’s owner,”

“Dr. Lecter, can you help me wrestle the wine from Beverly?” Will winked at Hannibal, trying to portray he was playing matchmaker. Hannibal furrowed his brows in confusion but seemed more than happy to play along.

Beverly, the perfect specimen she was, laughed loudly in that moment, slapping the shoulder of the woman next to her, who didn’t seem to mind. Will’s neck hairs stood on end. Actually he did *not* like the way the woman was gazing lustfully at his inebriated friend.

He pulled Hannibal along, clarifying as they headed toward Beverly, “I don’t think either one of us could wrestle wine from Beverly. I just needed to torture Alana a little. She has *so* got a boner for that lady,”

“You’re helping Dr. Bloom… acquire a date?” Hannibal took a sip of his own wine, ignoring the pout of the woman next to him as the pair of men placed themselves between her and Beverly. Will offered his shoulder for Beverly to lean down on while saying,

“What are friends for and all that? Go lesbians,”

“You don’t seem quite distraught by the prospect of her… not sharing your feelings,”

Will blinked. *Oh yeah.* Hannibal thought he liked Alana. A slow smile curled the edges of Will’s face.

“I’ve got my eye on someone else recently,” Will swallowed, “hopefully they’ll reciprocate,”

“I’m not sure many could resist your charms Will,” Hannibal smiled sadly. Beverly placed a hand on Hannibal’s shoulder with her other arm still wrestling Will into a headlock.

“Doctor I have got to say if you sixth nine as good as you wine and dine then Will is one lucky—“

She couldn’t finish as Will slapped a hand over her mouth, shaking his head and sputtering out profanities.

They spent the evening like that, playing their usual barbs of cat and mouse, babysitting Beverly from the masses, and watching the other guests respectfully filter out (and Beverly filter through the wine somehow).

When the grandfather clock struck 10 pm (because *of course* Hannibal had a huge clock like that). The last guest, Margot, bade them farewell, offering a drive home to a very tipsy Alana.

“Hold that thought,” Alana slurred to Margot. She gripped Will’s forearm. He fought the urge to squirm out of it, “Will can I have your help with something at my car?”

“I can—“ Margot began but Alana shook her head.

“This is something I need Will’s help with, but thank you,”

Will scratched the back of his neck but conceded. Margot and Hannibal’s stares at his back made him sweat. Why had everyone in the room suddenly gotten mad at him? Beverly was not helping as she let out a wolf whistle from some other room.

Out in cold air, Will hugged his arms attempting to tap down the gnawing curiosity eating at him.

Once to her car, Alana turned abruptly, grabbing his shirt and pulling him into a chaste, sloppy, drunk kiss. Will gently grabbed her forearms and pushed against her. A sadistic part of him hoped she remembered this tomorrow, knowing she’d be mortified over it. A bigger part hoped she definitely forgot all about it or *he* would be mortified over it.

“I’m sorry Will,” she patted his chest “I had to make sure I was a lesbian,”

Will cracked the cold air with his laughter.

“I’m not the only man in Baltimore Alana,”

“If I’m not attracted to you or Hannibal sexually, I don’t think I’ll be attracted to any man on this planet,” she shook her head.

Will *really* hoped she remembered this tomorrow.

“I feel the same. You’re beautiful, smart, kind, but more like a sister to me Alana. I also don’t think I could beat Margot in a fist fight,”

“You’re telling me…I just kissed my little brother,” Alana looked horrified, plastering her forehead to Will’s shoulder. Another laugh crashed into the still night.

“I’ll tell Margot you’re ready to go,” Will patted her back. She simply nodded, muttering about how she was going to be alone in a car with a millionaire.

Will opened the front door, the heat of the house stinging his eyes. Hannibal and Margot spoke quietly, politely in the walkway, as if they could hardly handle the distance of the foyer from the door. Will smiled.

Birds of a feather and all that.

“What did she need help with?” Margot allowed Hannibal to place her coat on her shoulders.

“Ask her. I guarantee you’ll enjoy her retelling more than mine,” Will opened the door for Margot, ignoring the dual gazes that bore into him. After the women drove away, Will

checked on Beverly, asleep on the couch. He ran two fingers in the divets of her neck, relaxed only when he felt the jump of her heart.

“Need some help with the dishes?” Will floated into the kitchen after Hannibal. Alcohol fuzzed his mind, dulling the edges of his anxiety. Strategically Will had consumed his drinks for this reason.

“I could never ask a guest to assist with cleaning up,” Hannibal clipped, viewing Will from the corner of his eye. Will scoffed and bumped Hannibal’s hip with his own, making room for himself at the sink.

“I think I can handle drying some dishes,” Will snatched a plate off the drying rack. Domestic silence settled between them until Hannibal asked,

“Do I get to know why Alana asked you outside or must I also hear the story from the perpetrator’s lips?” Hannibal handed the last plate to Will with a sphinx smile.

“Alana kissed me,” Will placed the dry dish into the cupboard. Hannibal dropped the cup in his hand, shattering it on the cold tile floor.

“You must be ecstatic. She has returned your feelings,” Hannibal spit out. Will laughed as he found the broom and began sweeping the glass.

“Yes she has the same feelings I have toward her,” Will didn’t think it was possible for Hannibal to go even *more* rigid but he did. Lecter was as close to an outburst Will had ever seen him.

With his fun had, Will lounged over and grabbed Hannibal’s belt loop, pulling the host in until their hips butted into each other.

“She returned the feeling of *friendship* Hannibal, I’ve never had a crush on Alana. That’s like saying I have a crush on Beverly,” Will had liquid courage pumping through him, but he still couldn’t make himself look into Hannibal’s eyes.

“Then why…”

“She said she wanted to make sure she was a full lesbian before trying to advance onto Margot,” Will barked another laugh, unable to hold it in, “god I hope she remembers all of it tomorrow. I can’t wait to tease her,”

Finally Will found the courage to look into Hannibal’s eyes. What he found there was a guarded expression. The kind a stray cat might have when offering them food. It sent a shiver down his spine, oh how Will loved this game, though he knew he shouldn’t.

“So that means…” Hannibal began, for once at a loss for words.

“I enjoy our time together Hannibal. I don’t say that very much, and you *really* tap dance on my nerves. Like a lot. Trust never comes easy to me. It is not lost on me that I am fickle and require lots of work to get along with,” the alcohol was now working against him, causing a ramble.

“Will—“

“Please let me finish. Before I lose my nerve,”

Hannibal inclined his head for Will to continue.

“I don’t like most people. I like to take any sort of relationship slow. I don’t like small talk or social groups or the opera. I’m not organized or clean or one to go out of my set routine. I’m your direct opposite really, but… I find myself enjoying our talks and missing you when you’re not next to me. If you’re willing to try, so am I,” Will rehooked his index finger on Hannibal’s belt loop, tugging with childish demand.

As always, Hannibal relented and allowed himself to be pulled closer.

Will showed his resolve, staring directly into Hannibal’s eyes and planting a soft, chaste kiss to the corner of Lecter’s mouth. It nearly missed the man’s lips entirely, but Will’s lips stung with scandal at the thought of him moving an inch to the left for a real kiss.

“Is this a joke?”

Will went rigid at those words, his body heating up so quickly in embarrassment that goosebumps littered his skin. Had Will misread the situation *this* severely? This was a new low even for him. He took a step back stuttering an apology, until Hannibal clasped his forearms, digging blunt nails past the fabric.

Really he was too strong to be a therapist.

“No I—,” Lecter dropped his head to Will’s shoulder, relief flooding his face, “I meant, *please* don’t let this be a joke or I think my heart may very well never recover,”

A deep breath from both of them, one of relief, one to take in the scent of another. For calming moments they stood there, tightly grasping the other to force proximity until Hannibal released his grip and stood to his full height. His regular attitude of total assurance squared his shoulders like a new coat.

“Was that a yes?” Will smirked, glancing through his eyelashes because he knew it would drive Hannibal crazy.

Hannibal resumed washing the silverware, butting Will’s hip as he handed the man a dish to dry. As Will turned, Hannibal placed a tender kiss to the temple and said

“An enthusiastic yes,”

“Will it’s about *damn time!* Everyone has been waiting for this for months, you know!” Beverly screamed from the doorway. Will turned bright red and stomped toward her.

“Beverly, get your ass back to that couch and go to sleep *now!”*

“And miss this? No way, I just won a bet from Price and Zeller. I need PROOF!” Beverly snapped blurry pictures as Will dragged her back to the couch, not missing an amused laugh

from the kitchen.

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Hannibal carved the heart delicately, a feeling heavily sitting in his chest weighing his usual light touch down. He cracked his neck in frustration.

Will's confession of his affection for Alana gripped him like a boa constrictor, tightening his person suit to the limit. The seams were stretching taunt under the thought of Will belonging to another.

And belong he would. Will was more loyal than a trained hunting hound. Hannibal had picked up on it when a technician was gossiping about Beverly in the quiets of the halls as the men hung in the shadows of Will's classroom. Will remained calm as ever, not even missing a breath as their conversation continued.

The next day the technician was cleaning out their desk, wiping tears with a shaking hand.

Hannibal wasn't sure how, but he knew Will was behind it. The agent had waved the technician out with a grin.

Hannibal shook his head in the present day. God he wanted that man carnally. Biblically.

His mood soured when a name popped up on his phone. The name he was actively avoiding.

Dr. Alana Bloom: Is the dinner party still on schedule for 7 tonight? :-)

Hannibal: Yes, dinner will be served promptly by 7:30.

Alana sent a barrage of emojis in response, prompting an eye raise from Hannibal. He never knew quite how to respond to messages such as these.

The hours dwindled down as the guests filtered in, each greeting him more elaborately than the last. Usually this display brought ghosts of smiles to his thin lips, but things felt a little gray tonight. Washed out by the color that hadn't yet arrived; the one color that the artist within himself *craved* to paint with, but never allowed itself to lounge on his welcoming brush.

The clock struck 7 as a knock bounced off the door. Hannibal feigned serenity but parasites of excitement crawled beneath his skin. A sigh of relief he hadn't realized he had been saving escaped his parted lips.

"Ah, our last two guests," Hannibal leaned closer, "arguably the two most important," He whispered as he kissed Beverly's extended hand.

Though his body faced her, Hannibal's eyes remained steadily trained on his splash of color. The royal blue clothes accentuated his dark features and, of course, highlighted those burning icy eyes of intelligence. Beverly squeezed Hannibal's hand, noticing where his eyes wandered off to. Though she was hardly offended. She looked excited.

“I bet you say that to everyone that graces your door Dr. Lecter,” Beverly snorted, playing the part of a posh member of society. Hannibal quirked a brow and hummed.

“Yes Miss Kantz, but sometimes I actually mean it,”

Will shifted his stance and rolled his shoulders. Hannibal’s mind raced with conversation topics, but he could think of none that would put Will at ease. Beverly broke the trance by waltzing herself (and by proxy Will) into the walkway.

“Will, allow me to take your coat,” Hannibal recovered. Really he wasn’t used to feeling so stagnant in social settings. Not since darker days in his childhood.

He wasn’t going to think about that.

“I’ll go greet everyone,” Beverly winked and patted Hannibal’s shoulder as she walked by. Hannibal’s fingers dragged across Will’s neck, noticing how sensitive it was. Once the jacket slipped past the shoulders, the smell hit him.

Lust boiled his insides, congratulating himself at how accurate he was to pair the scent with Will’s existing one. Through a test of sheer willpower Hannibal refrained from nosing the agent’s neck until it flushed red.

Fury doused the fiery feelings in his gut, icy realization that Will had chosen *Hannibal’s* gift to make a romantic impression on Alana tonight. Willpower was once again tested as Hannibal desperately wanted to sink his teeth into the man beneath him. Whether to make the man dinner or mark him in something he couldn’t wash off, Hannibal was still deliberating.

Will turned and said, “Everything ok?”

Blood pounded Hannibal’s ears, drowning the world in its full roar. He clutched Will’s jacket to ground himself. Three times he inhaled. Three times he exhaled.

“Everything is fine Will, let us join the rest of our company. I’m sure Alana will be excited to see you’ve arrived,” Hannibal grimaced, gliding past Will to lead the way.

He wanted Will, *ached* for the man. Not only for the carnal pleasure, but the potential to be understood and loved unconditionally. This was not a love Hannibal wished to force, painfully aware it would be just another suit the pair donned for each other, tight, itchy fabric to irritate their dormant creatures until they tore each other apart. Though Hannibal had entertained captivity as an option, the results felt… lack luster. How had Randall called it? “Shooting fish in a barrel”.

Though Hannibal was unsure how he was supposed to just allow Will to pick another. Eventually they would grow distant, priorities taken over by whatever spouse Will was copopulating with, until they didn’t know each other at all.

Hannibal would not stand for it.

That is exactly why he rudely interrupted the guest to his right so dinner could be announced before Alana inched any closer to Will.

Alana wore a form fitting, off the shoulder, dark green dress. To Hannibal's chagrin, she looked stunning in it with curled hair and light make up.

Thank god he'd thought ahead to assigned seating.

The lobster risotto was first, the simplest thing Hannibal had prepared today. Inwardly, he congratulated himself for a job well done as his lips closed around the fork. Out of the corner of Hannibal's eye he watched Will take his first bite after carefully sniffing it and grimacing.

The first time Will displayed this behavior Hannibal had been slightly miffed. After knowing Will for months now, Hannibal safely deduced it was what Will did with *everything.* New dish to try? Sniff and grimace. Meeting a new coworker? Sniff and grimace. Going somewhere he never had before? Sniff and grimace. Changing anything in his routine? Sniff, grimace, and most likely some tongue lashing. Reluctance was just Will's natural state.

"Holy shit Hannibal, this is fucking awesome," Will (and Hannibal's) shoulders melted. The other guests stared, going so still even the scrape of fork against plate stopped. Will shrugged and kept eating. Pride bloomed in Hannibal's heart, wet and dripping to pool warmth in his stomach.

"Thank you Will," Hannibal relished saying the man's name. It fit perfectly in his mouth. Though Hannibal could think of something else that might fit perfectly—

His thoughts were cut short as an outburst of kiss-assery flooded the room, everyone hoping to get the same look Hannibal bestowed on Will. Hannibal let his ego fatten a little, wiping his mouth and waiting until the chatter died down before saying,

"Thank you for your kind regards. Is everyone ready for the next course?"

Hannibal began monologuing the preparation of the next dish as he placed it in front of each guest, ladies first of course.

When he was seated once again, he looked to Will's place first, satisfied that the man had already finished with the dish. Another success.

"Could hardly finish it," Will jested, his face red for reasons Hannibal did not know. Hannibal restrained himself from an outright laugh as he dove into his lamb.

Hannibal relished as three FBI agents and a psychologist associated with them consumed human organs, complimenting him heavily on his skills. He swirled his wine, lavishly sipping it to hide his outright smirk. His ego was bursting at the seams, the very definition of the sin of gluttony. Nothing could beat such a feeling of superiority.

Well. Almost nothing. Hannibal mused as Will licked juice from his calloused fingers, finishing with a resounding pop of the digit.

Hannibal stood. He needed to clear the dishes. And his head. And his pants.

After the dishes cleared away, Hannibal mingled in the foyer with other guests, not trusting his heart (or any other parts) to converse with Will yet.

“Miss Verger, so happy to see you accept my invitation for dinner,” Hannibal inclined his head respectfully. From one predator to another, “so sorry to hear of your father and brother’s unfortunate work related accident,”

“Always a risk,” Margot sipped her wine with an inclined pinky, “working with pigs and it’s kind. Always a chance the livestock turns the tables,”

“Especially when such caretakers have their backs turned to their charge,” Hannibal’s eye crinkled mirthfully, “all it takes is one push or slip and into the pen the new prey falls,”

Margot’s jaw ticked.

“Or a pretty little distraction to lure the big fish out of the pond,” Margot countered, enjoying the way Hannibal’s own jaw ticked. She wasn’t an idiot, so she relented there, the pair shifting into more high society topics as a couple interjected into their conversation. After what felt a safe enough length of time, Hannibal captured Will in his field of view once more.

His mood soured instantly as Will and Alana walked toward himself and Margot. The approaching pair was whispering to each other, Will wore a closed lip smile, and Alana was flushed pink.

“I am gonna need so much more wine tonight,” Margot spit, apparently as equally miffed as Hannibal.

“Mind if I borrow him? I can trade you for some better company,” Will grinned widely, warmth flooding the small of Hannibal’s back as Will placed a hand there. Hannibal forced himself not to gawk as the women made their introductions.

Will was touching him.

Not only touching him but Hannibal hadn’t even suggested it. Hadn’t made a move to manipulate.

Will was doing this because it was coming naturally. The man that could hardly hold Alana’s arm on the short walk over was now *touching Hannibal on the back—*

“Dr. Lecter, can you help me wrestle the wine from Beverly?” Will winked at Hannibal, causing a butterfly to flutter in his stomach. Somehow, Hannibal remained calm as stone as Will dragged him away from the blushing women.

“I don’t think either one of us could wrestle wine from Beverly. I just needed to torture Alana a little. She has *so* got a boner for that lady,” Will clarified as they swam through the group toward the boisterous Beverly.

“You’re helping Dr. Bloom… acquire a date?” Hannibal took a sip of his own wine, ignoring the pout of the woman next to him as the pair of men placed themselves between her and Beverly. A mental note guaranteed someone of her *kind* would not be making another appearance at his table. Will offered his shoulder for Beverly to lean down on. She rubbed

her forehead on his offered stretch of skin and mumbled about Will being her best friend. Will patted her back while saying,

“What are friends for and all that? Go lesbians,”

“You don’t seem quite distraught by the prospect of her… not sharing your feelings,”

Will blinked until his face broke into a crooked grin.

“I’ve got my eye on someone else recently,” Will swallowed, “hopefully they’ll reciprocate,”

God damn does this agent ever stop picking up suitors from the damn freeway? No matter.

Hannibal was slightly relieved. He hadn’t wanted to kill Alana as it was a bit too close to his persona’s life. Whoever this new object of Will’s affection Hannibal would be sure to serve them beautifully on his finest china

“I’m not sure many could resist your charms Will,” Hannibal smiled sadly, hoping he captured the kicked puppy look he was going for. Beverly placed a hand on Hannibal’s shoulder with her other arm now trying to wrestle Will into a loving headlock.

“Doctor I have got to say if you sixth nine as good as you wine and dine then Will is one lucky—“

She couldn’t finish as Will slapped a hand over her mouth, shaking his head and sputtering out profanities. Hannibal allowed the pair a small chuckle.

They spent the evening like that, playing their usual barbs of cat and mouse (Hannibal trying to figure out who this new crush was), watching over an inebriated Beverly (who somehow became even more charming with her lack of filter), and watching the other guests respectfully filter out (and Beverly filter through the wine no matter how many times the men hid it from her).

Chiming revealed the arrival of 10pm too soon. Margot began her farewells, offering a tipsy Alana a ride home. Lurking below the surface of a polite Margot was a beast similar to Hannibal’s own.

Their sessions revealed her to be a predator in her own right. Though she had no prerogative to kill, she didn’t shy away from it as a means to an end.

Hannibal likened her to a Wolverine. One so used to the cold and desolate they hardly noticed it, peace preferring, but aggressive and territorial when provoked. And God did those weasels survive anything you threw at them.

So Hannibal wasn’t worried much about leaving a foolish Alana in Margot’s proximity. Just as his own eyes reflected to Margot, they were in it for the long game. They would cut the object of their affection from the herd, leaving nothing to save them, help lick the very wounds they inflicted, and have exactly what they wanted in the palm of their hand.

“Hold that thought,” Alana slurred to Margot. She gripped Will’s forearm. Hannibal fought the urge to slap it away, “Will can I have your help with something at my car?”

“I can—“ Margot began but Alana shook her head.

“This is something I need Will’s help with, but thank you,”

Hannibal flexed his fingers at his side as the pair exited his home. Control was like an old blanket Hannibal had gotten used to holding, a present comfort even on his worst days. Will was the family dog that ripped his precious blanket to shreds.

What was to be done about that?

“I think our fishing lines have tangled,” Margot mused with a tilted lip. Hannibal spun his wine glass by the stem with nimble fingers.

“They will find the pole they are tied to eventually,” Hannibal reveled in the way Margot took a step away from him, “though it might take some pulling to untangle them,”

Margot swallowed at the underlying threat.

“Careful Doctor. Every lure is embedded with a hook,”

Hannibal opened his maw to retort, but the subject of conversation burst through the door, souring the air with his giggling.

“What did she need help with?” Margot played the part of grateful house guest as Hannibal placed her coat on her shoulders.

“Ask her. I guarantee you’ll enjoy her retelling more than mine,” Will opened the door for Margot, ignoring the obvious manner Hannibal was attempting to bore a hole into his head.

After the women drove away, Hannibal stalked toward the kitchen while Will meandered to the foyer. Lecter assumed he was getting Beverly up in an attempt to drag her into the car so they could also leave.

“Need some help with the dishes?” Will floated into the kitchen after Hannibal, surprising but not startling him.

Hot, soapy water grounded the insistent hunger gnawing Hannibal’s mind. Dinner had just ended but he was starving.

“I could never ask a guest to assist with cleaning up,” Hannibal clipped, viewing Will from the corner of his eye. Proximity to a stolen prize was not something Hannibal was willing to deal with tonight. Will scoffed and bumped Hannibal’s hip with his own, making room for himself at the sink.

More Will-initiated contact.

“I think I can handle drying some dishes,” Will snatched a plate off the drying rack. Hannibal stewed as he washed one dish after the other, careful their hands did not touch.

“Do I get to know why Alana asked you outside or must I also hear the story from the perpetrator’s lips?” Hannibal handed the last plate to Will with a sphinx smile. He could play this game too.

“Alana kissed me,” Will placed the dry dish into the cupboard. Hannibal dropped the cup in his hand, shattering it on the cold tile floor.

Nevermind. He could not play this game.

“You must be ecstatic. She has returned your feelings,” Hannibal hissed. Hannibal folded the towel in his hand, unfolded it, and refolded as Will began sweeping the glass.

“Yes she has the same feelings I have toward her,” Will said with a laugh. As if the whole *world* was just so goddamn funny tonight. Hannibal meticulously beat his fingers on the counter in repetitions of three.

He could regain control. He would regain control. When he counted to three one more time, life would be back in control.

A tug at his belt loop snapped him from his mental bartering. Their hips butted, sending another infuriating whiff of that aftershave to choke Hannibal.

“She returned the feeling of *friendship* Hannibal, I’ve never had a crush on Alana. That’s like saying I have a crush on Beverly,” Will avoided Hannibal’s eyes, a sure sign the agent was telling the truth.

“Then why…” Hannibal gripped the counter. Anger coiled around his heart. Will had played him. Arousal dropped toward his lower abdomen… Will had *played* him.

“She said she wanted to make sure she was a full lesbian before trying to advance onto Margot,” Will barked another laugh, unable to hold it in, “god I hope she remembers all of it tomorrow. I can’t wait to tease her,”

“So that means?” Hannibal quirked a brow, unwilling to let hope be planted in his chest.

“I enjoy our time together Hannibal. I don’t say that very much, and you *really* tap dance on my nerves. Like a lot. Trust never comes easy to me. It is not lost on me that I am fickle and require lots of work to get along with,” Will rambled.

“Will—“ Hannibal started, electricity burning every nerve.

“Please let me finish. Before I lose my nerve,”

Hannibal inclined his head for Will to continue. Patient enough to burn alive if it meant Will was saying what he hoped Will was saying.

“I don’t like most people. I like to take any sort of relationship slow. I don’t like small talk or social groups or the opera. I’m not organized or clean or one to go out of my set routine. I’m your direct opposite really, but… I find myself enjoying our talks and missing you when you’re not next to me. If you’re willing to try, so am I,” Will rehooked his index finger on Hannibal’s belt loop, tugging with childish demand.

As always, Hannibal relented and allowed himself to be pulled closer.

Then something daunting happened. Hannibal was out of control. Hannibal was utterly and wholly shocked.

Hannibal was kissed.

“Is this a joke?” His voice cracked. Insecurity dug into Hannibal’s happiness like a mole through dirt. *Don’t let this be a joke. I can’t take it if it’s a joke. I need you so badly. You set my world on fire. Don’t play with me anymore, not like this, not now.*

Will went rigid at those words, his body littering with goosebumps and his face going red. He took a step back stuttering an apology. This desperation was so foreign to Hannibal that he might as well be on a seesaw in the middle of a typhoon. So he did an unthinkable act.

He let go of control and grabbed onto Will instead. Blunt nails threatened to rip the shirt. Hannibal was glad it was already so wrinkly.

“No I—,” Lecter dropped his head to Will’s shoulder, relief pooling at the corners of his eyes, “I meant, *please* don’t let this be a joke or I think my heart may very well never recover,” Hannibal settled for the truth. God forbid more misunderstandings were birthed from lack of communication.

He took in the scent of Will, natural smell enhanced by the aftershave, a gift Hannibal could *finally* appreciate. Will had marked himself. Marked himself as Hannibal’s, whether Will knew the weight of that decision or not Lecter didn’t care.

The dye had been cast, staining both men beyond separation.

“Was that a yes?” Will gazed through his eyelashes, driving Hannibal crazy.

“An enthusiastic yes,” Hannibal began washing the rest of the glassware, sneaking a tender kiss to Will’s temple as he handed the dishes for drying. Their hips kissing more than their lips. They could work on that.

“Will it’s about *damn time!* Everyone has been waiting for this for months, you know! *”* Beverly screamed from the doorway. Will, beautiful man he was, turned bright red and stomped toward her.

“Beverly, get your ass back to that couch and go to sleep *now!”* Will shoved Beverly away, giving Hannibal a glorious view as he left. Hannibal continued washing dishes with a laugh (and an innocent wondering if that ass was genetic or if Will was just some fallen angel).

“And miss this? No way I just won a bet from Price and Zeller. I need PROOF!” Beverly snapped blurry pictures as Will situated her back in the foyer.

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Beverly felt the cool blade slice across her skin, dismantling and displaying her like a slide under a microscope.

Will was straight jacketed and muzzled, desperately screaming as he mentally recreated the gruesome crime scene.

The killer was *there* oh god the killer was *right behind them. He was feeding them her kidneys with a smile. The killer was—*

Beverly sat up with a start, taking a moment to recognize she was on Will’s couch and not her own bed. Her heart jumped like a rabbit escaping a hunting dog. Winston pressed a cold nose into knee, dissipating the last of her mental fog.

She padded toward Will’s room in the dark, familiar enough with the area to keep the lights off. Winston grew excited when he realized the destination, overtaking her pace.

The bedroom door opened with a creak, the sleeping body inside nigh producing a stir. Will never fell asleep quickly, but once he was asleep that man was *out.*

“Will?” Beverly poked his shoulder. Her head pounded with a hangover. She prayed she didn’t throw up all over the friend beneath her.

“Beh-?” Will blinked and swatted around in the dark.

“I had a nightmare. Scoot over,” Beverly rubbed her temples.

“Waz bout? About ba dog? Yeah?” Will made no sense as he scooted from his starfish position to one side of the bed.

“No, not about the black dog again. It was scarier,” Beverly pressed herself into his side, allowing Will’s steady heartbeat to calm her. Will patted her head a bit too roughly, accidentally tangling his fingers in her matted hair. The thought comforted her anyways.

“I’ll kill it fo you…” Will muttered as he fell back into fluttering sleep, only stirring when Winston sighed against the pair.

Sandwiched between Winston and Will, Beverly finally relaxed enough to drift to sleep, scalpels and tableus drifting from her mind as her conscious did.

Chapter End Notes

also in case you know nothing about autism (but I think if you're reading a 50k+ fanfic… look in the mirror babe…) it's super common for autistic people to have an *uncanny valley* effect. When Will is talking about how he used to scare his dad at night that is something that really happened in my childhood. It's my headcannon Will was a super uncanny weird kid (and never really grew out of it. I never did)

also this was not Bi Alana erasure. I just headcannon her as a lesbian in denial tbh. And sorry but Alana is a Type AAAAAA perfectionist so you KNOW she'd want to have sexuality totally figured out before dating someone

Will's shoulder: exists
Every tipsy person in this chapter: "it's free real estate," /ref

Thanks for reading ❤️🔥

First date part 1

Chapter Summary

Little bit of fluff ~
Hannibal and Will have a day of both doing something they love for a first date <3
I split this into two parts because… I'm impatient and ready for you to read it. Plus I can't predict how long it will be so I thought better to split it. I feel like it's been so long since I posted

Chapter Notes

I like to think Will and Hannibal are both pretty rigid in what they like and their own hobbies. To the point even relenting to each other isn't ideal. But you know what they WILL do is tit for tat. A little "if I participate in this then you have to do THIS for ME" and slowly they realize… making each other happy is their favorite hobby

(Aka they are so used to playing the long game of manipulation they don't realize they don't HAVE to manipulate each other to make the other stay around)

PLEASE be generous with my use of fishing knowledge here. I'm not a fly fisherman 😔

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Without alcohol ready in his hand, Will regretted *everything*.

There he stood, as comfortable in a classroom as he could be, lecturing about the newest Ripper kill. Well he would be comfortable if *someone* wasn't staring at him with adoration. Heat creeped up his neck like suffocating vines.

Will had come across suitors before—usually students just looking for a role model in all the wrong ways— and it was so easy to ignore them, even as they stared at him from their desk. No matter where Will drifted to, Hannibal's gaze hungrily followed, making the teacher stutter.

His focus was all over the place, enough that his students dared risk whispering in their strictest instructor's class.

"I want a 500 word essay on what can be gleaned from this kill and the Ripper's pathological way of thinking. Due Thursday. Class dismissed," he shooed them away as the students

groaned.

“Impressive as always Dr. Graham,” Matthew straggled behind in class. He was still Will’s “assistant” and took his job incredibly seriously.

“Matthew, that was my last class of the day. You can go on home,” Will handed him his papers back. The boy may be frivolous in conversations, but he dissected killer’s psyche with a scrutiny Will rarely came across. Even though Matthew never seemed to be listening in lectures, he was easily making A’s in Will’s classes.

“Do you have plans for lunch?” Matthew bounced on the balls of his feet beside Will’s desk. A looming shadow caused him to flinch and spin.

“He actually does have plans. With his boyfriend,” Hannibal thunked a brimming container of food on the desk. Will thought his head might explode with how fast the blood rushed to his face.

“You two… are an item,” Matthew tossed an accusing index finger between the two. Hannibal brushed his own fingers over Will’s neck, causing the agent to roll his eyes and frown, but he didn’t push Hannibal away.

“Oh my *god* . You *are* an item, *yes!* Randall owes me twenty bucks,” Matthew whipped his phone out and dialed a number.

“Matthew,” Will seethed, pinching Hannibal’s side to make him stop fucking touching everywhere.

“Don’t worry Dr. Graham, I’ll leave you two alone,” Matthew winked. As he exited the room there was a faint *I so fucking told you Randall—*

Will sighed and plopped in his chair.

Hannibal took this as a sign to begin placing plates in front of the teacher. Will watched it all without uttering a sound, determined to reprimand Hannibal with the silent treatment.

“I baked a ziti with handmade pasta,” Hannibal launched into the benefits of making pasta yourself as Will chewed. He tried to hide how good it was, but Hannibal always produced dishes that might as well rival the Bible’s mana.

Though Will never could decipher what seasoning he used on the meat. It always tasted… different. Something he couldn’t put his finger on. Not that he was complaining. It was a good kind of different.

“What do you think? Worth waiting for a late lunch?” Hannibal smirked. Will pretended to ponder and shrugged, shoving his empty plate toward Hannibal.

Hannibal ran his finger over Will’s knuckles, the therapist’s version of pouting. Ignoring the gesture, Will tucked his head in and began grading papers.

“Will,” Hannibal leaned close. Under the desk his fancy leather shoe slipped under Will’s pant leg. It only brushed his ankle then retreated, but Will nearly fell out of his chair.

“Ok, ok, you’re such a brat. Yes it was worth the wait,” Will tapped his knee twice and added, “Your food is always worth it,”

He shoved his glasses up his nose in embarrassment. The habit of wearing them while teaching a hard one to break.

“I’m glad you think so, I brought dessert as well,” Hannibal cracked open another container that steamed with a burst of sugary air. Will felt his mouth water as it was placed in his hand.

Bread pudding, one of his childhood favorites, made his bursting stomach suddenly have room for dessert. His fork broke it apart tenderly, bringing a small portion to his nose first. After it passed the sniff test Will enclosed his mouth around the soft pudding.

“Holy. Mother. Of. God,” Will broke his attempt at silent treatment. Hannibal could scream about their relationship from the rooftops if the good doctor kept feeding Will like this. Will chuckled at the thought of Hannibal raising his voice. He couldn’t even picture it.

“God nor their mother had much to do with that dish. Just a recipe passed down from generations of Lecters,” Hannibal tore into his own bread pudding more evenly than Will had.

“Are you making a poke at my southern sayings or alluding to yourself as god?” Will jabbed his fork accusingly in Hannibal’s direction.

“Does it make you uncomfortable for people to know we’re ‘an item’?” Hannibal wrapped his lips around his fork with a tease of a smile. They were nice lips but damn did they like changing subjects rapidly.

“I’m just…” Will mopped up the remaining brown sugar drizzle with his last bite of bread, “…private. I don’t like them knowing my favorite shirt if I can help it, let alone what happens in my free time. Matthew is no exception, if anything I definitely don’t want him getting involved in my personal life,”

“ *Our* personal lives,” Hannibal clicked the tops of his containers together and began loading them back in his cooler.

“I should have known you’d lay it in thick after how you acted the first time I called you my friend,” Will capped his pen and stood alongside Hannibal.

“Are you calling me clingy?” Hannibal shouldered the tote with a smirk.

“I’ll walk you out. My classes are finished,” Will deflected, grabbing his own bag and rolling his eyes as Hannibal took a step back.

“I’m not sure we should. I wouldn’t want any of your students thinking we’re *together.* My my, think of what your coworkers will say behind doors , ” Hannibal said. Will pinched his side with a grin.

“Ok, don’t get into a tizzy,”

Hannibal raised his eyebrows.

“Dr. Lecter, are you going to make me parade you around my workplace before our first date?” Will laced his pinky around Hannibal’s own. It was surprisingly cold for having just dealt with warm food.

“Maybe,” Hannibal cocked his head, reminding Will of a conceited bird, “though I also came here to discuss that,” the pair began walking toward the parking lot, pinkies linked, ignoring anyone else in the hall.

“Parading you around?”

“Our first outing. There is a new art gallery having its opening tomorrow evening. I was hoping you could join me,”

Boring “I can do that, if that morning we go fishing together. I’ll make a picnic lunch,” Will inwardly smiled. No way would this guy go fishing let alone eat something that Will made—

“Sounds delightful. We’ll have to leave by 7pm to attend the gallery, will that coincide with our schedules?” Hannibal deposited the cooler in his backseat as they arrived at their shared destination. Will soured as he opened Hannibal’s driver door.

“Yes that will be plenty of time I suppose,” Will tapped the car roof impatiently. He had nothing to wear to a gallery. Before Hannibal entered the driver seat, he paused and tucked Will’s hair behind his ear.

“Good. It’s a date,”

Will blushed at the contact, “be there at 7am. Fish bite early and—“ he scratched the back of his neck

“—drive safe,”

Why is caring about people so damn embarrassing??

“Likewise,” Hannibal’s eyes crinkled at the sides. Will liked when they did that.

*****

Will drummed his fingers on the counter. Impulsively, he’d bought Hannibal some wader overalls, assuming the man didn’t already have any. Anxious thoughts squirmed like earthworms in a garden.

Would Hannibal be offended?

Did Hannibal actually plan to fish?

What if he scoffs? I’m gonna punch him if that man scoffs at me.

Although Will had his own games to play this morning. One that could get him punched.

Winston huffed at the door signaling a visitor's approach. Will rubbed his ears a little too harshly from frayed nerves, but Winston didn't seem to mind as he leaned into Will's touch.

They walked to the door together, Winston shooting out to greet Hannibal (hoping for some heart jerky). Will leaned against the door frame, drinking in the scene of Hannibal indulging his dog, before noticing the food container in Hannibal's hand.

"I told you I'd make the food," Will crossed his arms.

"You said you'd provide lunch. I'm assuming you have not made yourself breakfast?" Hannibal handed the container to Will (who was not about to reveal he ate a pop tart as breakfast).

A pastry grinned up at him, a semi circle stuffed croissant next to a glazed danish. He was quite unsatisfied about how good they smelled.

"What's the filling?" Will asked half way through the savory side. His stomach twisted in knots despite the flaky dough. He was delaying the inevitable conversation of Hannibal's attire, an expensive looking sweater and slacks, which brought out his biceps but did nothing to attest to his fishing experience. Will shuffled in his already donned waders, embarrassed even though he was the one dressed appropriately.

"Ground beef with Asiago cheese and surprise seasonings,"

"This one?" Will held up the danish after taking a massive bite

"Raspberry," Hannibal climbed the steps, showing his ridiculous shoe choice. They were going in the *mud* for God's sake.

"I got you waders. But you don't have to wear them if you're not getting in the water," Will gushed out, pulling his ball cap tighter on his head for comfort. He couldn't keep it in anymore, unable to stand a chance of awkwardness permeating his mind. He'd been fretting over the purchase since last night.

"That is a bit relieving. I got you something for the gallery last night but was worried you'd bristle at the suggestion," Hannibal slipped into Will's house, his nostrils flaring like a predator scenting a prey's den. Will bristled.

"Please don't tell me you bought me something expensive," Will carded past him, making a haste for the lunch box. Hannibal could not see the surprise lunch until they were eating it. It would ruin the fun.

"What's for lunch?" Hannibal stalked toward him.

"Oh no you don't, you're not changing the subject, tell me *how expensive,* " Will guarded the lunch box and handed Hannibal his designated waders. Will eyeballed them correctly. It appeared they'd fit.

“Inexpensive,” Hannibal said. The words ‘ *to me’* hung in air, “why I’m sure these overalls were a bigger sacrifice than the suit was,”

This damn Lecter and his phrasing techniques. He hadn’t used “more expensive” on purpose.

Will narrowed his eyes, “Do you have any other shirts? That sweater is going to get dirty,”

Hannibal dropped his head down as if the cream sweater picked itself out for him this morning. The action made Will’s own eyes drop to the man’s chest.

The sweater looked a tad small anyways, tight on Hannibal’s upper arms and pecs.

“It’s gotten dirty before,” Hannibal grinned, taking the waders from Will.

“Did you just make an innuendo at me?” Will laughed as he filled Winston’s food bowl; the only answer to his question being the soft click of the bathroom door.

*****

Will recast with the gentle stream lapping at his thighs. The air was brisk but the sun was out and calm. Perfect weather for fishing, without even the mosquitos buzzing. There were only two sounds in the still outline of trees.

One was the bellowing elk. It hadn’t stopped for close to three days leading up to their first date. Desperate in its calls but never making an appearance in front of Will.

“Will. My fishing line appears to be stuck in the tree again,” chimed the other sound, attempting to hide annoyance.

Will schooled his expression. He didn’t want Dr. Lecter thinking Will was making fun of him (he was).

After a short but triumphant wrestle with the tree, Will handed the rod in restored condition to his date.

“You have to swing it like this,” Will laced his fingers atop Hannibal’s, flicking his wrist with a snap as the line blew through the wind, plopping in the stream with a dramatic splash.

“That was a roll cast,” Will said, bees buzzing under his skin with the chance to talk about fishing. The entire walk down to his little creek was filled with Will’s blabbering about techniques and lures. Hannibal had listened patiently, interjecting a question every once in a while.

Will let go of Hannibal’s hands, wiping the sweaty palms on his thighs, embarrassed he hadn’t noticed the prolonged touch. Hannibal gazed down with half lidded eyes, unaffected by physical contact because *of course* he was unaffected. Hannibal was calm and cool in everything he did. If Will hadn’t seen him break a glass at the dinner party, Will might not even believe Hannibal could break anything at all.

“Interesting,” Hannibal breathed, looking toward the horizon where his line bobbed.

“Yes there are several casts—“

“You,” Hannibal turned his head back to Will, a toothless smile wantonly perched on his lips.

“Hmm?” Will got ready to cast his line again.

“You’re interesting. Though fishing does have its quaint qualities,”

Will misstepped at that, casting his line into the tree branches, he still wasn’t used to Hannibal having such *outspoken* affection at the oddest times.

“Oh my, I didn’t mean for you to lose concentration so badly. I apologize,” Hannibal said. His sparkling eyes said otherwise.

What the fuck.

When had Will ever thought a man’s eyes were *sparkling?*

But they *were* sparkling with defiance and a streak of sadism.

Like a wild dog longed to be tamed. Will flexed his fingers. Training strays was one of his hobbies.

“It’s ok, let me untangle it,” Will feigned ignorance. It would be much more fun to let Hannibal think he was sneaky. For him to think Will couldn’t read him like a book.

The fish clipped to Will’s hips jostled, reminding him these few hours were productive (even if he had to untangle Hannibal’s rod four times). The elk bellowed, reminding him of… he wasn’t sure. It always preceded danger, but what was dangerous now? He was out in the calm creek fishing with his sleeping dog and partner.

After fifteen minutes of snapping the line back and forth, coaxing it from the tree seemed impossible, so Will cut the line. Satisfied with today’s activities, he resigned himself to hover by Hannibal instead.

The grating of the elk call ground his nerves each step Will took, nearly blurring his vision. It sounded even more harrowing today, baying with a cracked throat and stamping its feet like it was being hunted by wild dogs.

“Will? Is everything all right?” Hannibal reached for him, but his rod burst forward, the first bite Hannibal had all day.

“Reel it Hannibal!” Will grew excited, trudging over at a quicker pace to help reel the monster in. Hannibal reeled, his biceps bulging as the rod bent to kiss the water’s surface.

Will clasped Hannibal’s hands.

Four things happened at the same time.

There was a gunshot that ricocheted through the air.

The elk stopped baying.

The rod snapped.

Hannibal's sweater got dirty as Will had predicted.

Hannibal flung back with the pressure of the rod no longer anchoring him, crashing into the rocks of the creek bed. Will was next, by his own choice, ferally looking around for the source of the gunshot.

"So much for a first catch," Hannibal scoffed. He side eyed Will crouching beside him, about to ask if Will was down there for moral support, but Will gripped his shoulder.

"Did you not hear that?" Will desperately clung to the back of Hannibal's neck, as if his mortal hand could block any harm befalling the pair.

"You mean my ass hitting the creek? Unfortunately I felt it,"

"The gun," Will's heart seized at Winston sunbathing across the creekbed, eerily still. Surely the poor mutt hadn't been…

"Gun? Are you sure it wasn't the rod snapping? I'll buy you a new one—"

"Winston!" Will whistled. The dog immediately sat up with a lolling tongue, annoyed that someone interrupted his nap.

No if Winston hadn't even flinched from his patch of grass there was no way a gun had gone off.

"Perhaps it's time to stop for lunch," Hannibal patted Will's forearm. Small indentations of half moons decorated Hannibal's neck from Will's frantic grip. Hannibal didn't seem to mind.

Will swallowed and stood up slowly. After one more wary glance around, he reached his hand to help Hannibal from the icy waters, who took it with ease.

"I must admit I'm intrigued to see what you have made for lunch," Hannibal attempted to ground the young man beside him, but Will kept an eye to the woods and a hand hovering over Hannibal's back asif he was waiting to shove Hannibal back down if another shot fired.

Will's intended joke of lunch now felt flat. Weakly, he smiled at Hannibal, fisting his hand to his side.

"I spent a long time preparing it. I hope you're ready to see my cooking capabilities," Will walked up the bank, spreading the packed blanket across the cool grass. The lunch box

plodded in the middle. Hannibal raised his eyebrows quizzically, but patiently waited for Will to dole out the food.

Will handed a tightly sealed ziplock to Hannibal, who stared at the squished sandwich with… unfathomable distaste.

“And this is?”

“Bologna on white bread. Don’t worry, I have mustard and mayonnaise packets too,” Will smirked, finding the humor in his joke again. Hannibal’s face was worth everything.

“This is what you insisted on preparing instead of allowing me the pleasure of cooking for us?” Hannibal rotated the sandwich, like there would be a secret gourmet meal between the slices of bread.

“Why Dr. Lecter, are you suggesting my assembling of a sandwich is not *good enough* for your palate?” Will squirted mayonnaise on his sandwich, taking an obscenely large bite. Now that they were official, Will wanted to see how far he could really push Hannibal’s buttons. How much he could get away. Will eagerly wanted to see the man show some type of emotion, anything really, and Will be the cause of any and all outbursts. Hannibal set his mouth in a hard line.

“Are you perhaps testing my limits to see if I’ll abandon you over trivial things, before you become too attached to me?”

Ouch

Will’s eye twitched, a nerve stepped on by Hannibal.

“Dr. Lecter, are you trying to find an excuse to waste your food?”

Will had scoured the internet for Hannibal’s past, anything besides the surgeon and artistic award and had frustratingly come up empty. That didn’t mean Will had no insight into the man’s childhood, while Lecter may be a psychiatrist, Will was a member of the FBI BAU. Something utterly catastrophic happened in Hannibal’s childhood. Something concerning food. Hannibal never wasted a crumb, not even the sauce carefully decorating the plates. Will had seen the compost pile, the garden, the saving of carrot tops and avocado pits and coffee grounds. If Hannibal wanted to hit below the belt with Will’s abandonment fears, Will would hit below the knees with the doctor’s own wounds.

Hannibal’s teeth practically glowed in the afternoon sun, sharp and wet, as he bit into the sandwich.

“I wouldn’t dream of it,”

“Neither would I,” Will flung a piece of meat into Winston’s mouth, “dream of getting attached to you I mean. I don’t think you’re that interesting,”

“So you’ve mentioned before,” Hannibal rubbed the back of his neck, savoring the nail marks still there.

Will wondered if all partners spoke like this to one another. He didn't have great experiences.

The walk back was nearly silent. It wasn't uncomfortable to Will, more like taunt with some invisible fishing line. They were hooked on each other, skin ripping if they strayed too far, but it was a painful attachment. They both pulled the line until their fingers bled.

A pained howl cut through the air. Will stopped and turned to look for it, sure he would see that omen of black antlers. There was nothing except the cry bouncing in his own ears.

Hannibal laced their fingers together. The call was cut short, half way in the middle like some incomplete warning. In the distance Will could hear it.

Skin separating from tendons and tendons separating bone. Wolves tearing an elk apart. The toxic need for each other to keep ecosystems in balance. To keep nature in harmony.

Death.

Hannibal silently squeezed Will's encapsulated hand, encouraging him onward to a destination neither of them could predict.

Chapter End Notes

Also started my very own Hannigram playlist if you wanna check it out. It's something I help with writing sometimes and I think it's fun to see the writer's mindset through songs, you never know what might click! It's small right now…

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6yo6FPDcMF46s93q8VaHpS?si=9nr_lAK6T7mEY_tQwde1Ug&pi=u-Lw5K4wpNTxey

Will: ha let him think he can hide stuff from me lol
Hannibal: the literal Chesapeake ripper :3

First date part 2

Chapter Summary

Hannibal and Will visit an art gallery
More fluff ~ sure hope nothing crazy happens <3
Hope you don't mind my small OC interactions

Chapter Notes

rises from my depression coffin *throws off my writer's block blanket*
I lived bitches

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal turned in the mirror, observing himself twist and turn like snake scales shimmering in the sun. This was one of his favorite casual outfits, a deep maroon sweater that brought out his eyes. He exited his bedroom, satisfied with his groomed appearance.

"Please tell me you did not get me a suit Hannibal," Will was perched on the edge of his living room couch, as if the man expected Hannibal to ask him to leave at any moment. As if Hannibal didn't want the man by his side through everything, as if Hannibal hadn't seriously considered locking the man in the basement the minute he walked in here. Will had arrived early, his curls still damp from a shower he exited too early, for fear of being late.

Hannibal wanted to scrunch the wild mess, tame order and neatness to it. He wanted to rip Will's skull right off the top, slice and sautée the delirious parts of his brain and feed it to Will's patient mouth.

But then that mouth would not be *nearly* as stimulating as it is now.

Hannibal held out a dark green sweater and dark brown pants. Will scrunched his nose like he did before trying a new food. He cautiously felt the texture of the clothes, relieved they wouldn't overstimulate him.

As if Hannibal would make such a mistake.

For the weeks leading up to their confession Hannibal cataloged every minute reaction Will had to fabrics. Velvet and microfiber seemed to be his absolute abhors. The last time Beverly and Will fought she'd worn velvet shirts all week, threatening to hug Will if he entered her lab. Luckily they resolved their issues without such drastic measures.

“I have sweaters at home,” Will grasped the sweater between his fingers, sliding it up and down the sleeves methodically. It was his version of *I don’t deserve something this nice.*

“Indulge me,” Hannibal ushered Will to a guest bathroom to change. If he leaned close he could still smell the creek on Will, deep earth tones swirling in Hannibal’s gifted aftershave and the natural scent of a human body. It reminded Hannibal of times back in his childhood, desperately digging for earthworms to attract fish with, not knowing what that cold winter would hold for his sister.

He didn’t want to be reminded.

Will exited the bathroom with a skeptical look.

“How did you guess my size?”

“You are not a trusting man are you?”

“You knew that before this date,” Will adjusted the sweater in several places, but Hannibal could tell the clothing was comfortable.

“Shall we leave?” Hannibal held an arm out to Will. A large hook for a large fish. Will licked his lips and eyed the arm, clicking his fingers on the side of his hip with contemplation. Hannibal chummed the water.

“After the gallery I have a restaurant in mind for us. They grill a lovely steak,”

Will narrowed his eyes, but took Hannibal’s arm to be reeled to the car. Hannibal opened the door for Will, placing the fish into the net. Captured.

Hannibal wondered if Will would appreciate this imagery but kept it to himself.

“You really listen to classical music in your car? That wasn’t like a Christmas special?” Will snorted. Hannibal smirked.

“I appreciate most types of music, but yes classical is ‘really’ the genre I indulge in the most,”

“Do you listen to it while you cook? I mean, when you’re cooking by yourself,”

“Indeed,”

“Let me guess, Mozart is your favorite, that is what’s playing now isn’t it?” Will leaned back confidently.

“It was what’s playing but he is my second favorite. My current is Beethoven as I have grown fond of his **Piano concerto No. 1 -I- Allegro con brio,”**

Will snapped his fingers dramatically, “damn! I thought had you all figured out doctor,”

“All in due time. I’m sure you’re closer than you realize,” Hannibal drummed his fingers silently against the wheel.

—

“Hell. No.” Will looked at Hannibal’s outstretched arm like a cottonmouth floating on the top of a still lake, “I’m not some trophy wife. Husband. Person. I’m not walking up like damn Cinderella hanging on your arm in front of people,”

“May I have this instead,” Hannibal outstretched an open palm to Will, finger splayed in eager welcome.

“Why can’t we walk up there like *normal* people,”

You and I are anything but normal

Hannibal’s hand closed like a wilted flower, “fine. Let us be off then,”

Light drizzle accompanied them as Hannibal handed their two tickets to the attendant. The soft raining, quiet murmur of patrons, and soft aromatic scents— *sandalwood?*— relaxed Hannibal. He was eager to see Will’s point of view of all the pieces.

He was eager for Will to shred them up with snarky comments and blunt observations.

He was eager for Will to compare them to Ripper bodies. Eager for Will to say how *tacky* everything was compared to the art the Ripper doled out.

The first painting they drifted to was a seascape with a whale breaching the foam. Lines were zagged in a cutting expertise of perspective to draw the looker into the waves.

“Good lord that is *tacky* ” Will whispered close to Hannibal. The man’s eye brow was cocked as his eyes drifted to the other paintings, finding none of them assmusing at a glance.

“Tell me Will, does art have to have a complex juxtaposition to life or can it not just reflect the painter’s feelings unto the looker. Isn’t that its own power? Forcing someone you don’t even know to feel things from something you created,”

“I think that if a painting is going to cost money it can’t be something I could find in a bin at goodwill,” Will snickered, quickly playing it off as a cough when another couple slotted beside them.

Will slinked closer to Hannibal as they moved to the next piece. It was a cascading chaos of primary colors, swirled and splattered across a black and white background.

“Oh you have *got* to be kidding me,” Will whispered to avoid the people next to him.

“I think—“

“Oh come on now, you cannot even play devil’s advocate for this one. It’s swirls of colors on paper! Shit the stuff you make in your free time is better than —“ Will made an exaggerated

expression at the painting's direction "—whatever the hell this is. People make a living off this?"

"Not many. This piece is only a couple hundred," Hannibal drifted slightly closer, their shoulders nearly touching, his heart beating from Will's complement of his art.

Will nearly choked, and put on his glasses (even though they weren't prescription and they both knew it) to read the price tag. And he called Hannibal dramatic.

"What the f—"

"Dr. Lecter, I cannot believe you made it to our open house!" A lithe person with a deep cadence of voice stalked toward them. They were the type of person that whichever angle you looked at them you couldn't quite pinpoint their gender. Will could care less, backing away into the folds of Hannibal's shadow.

"Dr. Sunset, how are you?" Hannibal shook their hand with vigor. They blushed heartily and handed Hannibal a glass of wine. It wasn't cheap if Hannibal's nose could be trusted.

"I've told you a million times Dr. Lecter, Wolfgang is fine. How are you enjoying the art so far?" Wolfgang fidgeted with stars in their eyes. Hannibal happened to meet them in an art gallery when the student just finished their PhD in Art Restoration. He'd encouraged them to open a gallery and use a name they felt comfortable with. Hannibal had even helped them pick out *Wolfgang* .

"I do recall also telling you 'a million times' to refer to me as Hannibal," Hannibal took a sip of his wine, oaky earth tones splashing his tongue. A cold hand brushed his own, a possessive pinky wrapping around his.

"Wolfgang, this is Will, my partner," Hannibal tugged the pinky forward like a leash on a prize dog. He relished the way Will's eyes half heartedly scanned the intruder of conversation. It had been an unfortunate interruption, Hannibal enjoyed Wolfgang's work, but a date was not the time for third parties. Wolfgang's cheeks went cherry again.

"Dr. Graham, I've heard so much about you. I can't believe I'm meeting you right now. Small world," Wolfgang quickly handed Will his own wine glass. Will and Hannibal's eyebrows raised in unison.

"You… know who I am?"

"Oh god of course I do! You're the only one that can make heads or tails of any Ripper case," Wolfgang leaned close, working their bottom lip between teeth, "and you're the only one I've seen *appreciate* their work for the artwork it is,"

"And you know this because…?" Will feigned indifference, but Hannibal could tell he was excited to meet a fellow fan. Wolfgang tapped a teal heel on the tile floor.

"I hate to admit it, but I am an avid reader of that Lounds character. No matter how uncouth she may be. How've you read her newest article? It's about you,"

Will hummed in agreement, encasing an arm around Hannibal's lower back and tapped twice.

"Dear Wolfgang, we simply must be getting to the rest of the pieces here. I'm scared if I don't they'll all be sold by the time I leave your company," Hannibal squeezed their hand in a polite muting of the conversation. Wolfgang, ever on the uptake, took the hint.

"It was so lovely to see you again. Thank you for supporting me," they turned to Will with an outstretched hand, "and it was lovely to meet you,"

Will shook their hand curtly, nearly harshly if you didn't know him, but Hannibal knew that meant he'd taken a liking to the kid.

"Yea," Will looped his arm back to Hannibal's waist with a nod, his natural twang dusting Wolfgang's nose with another blush.

Don't lose my favor with wandering eyes Wolfgang

"Enjoy the rest of your date. You two seem to work," they threw out to the men's backs.

The pair stopped at the next painting of a barn dotted with cows.

"They seemed nice," Will drummed his fingers on Hannibal's side.

"They are. I was quite elated to get an invitation to their opening,"

"And… you enjoy their eye for art?" Will made a vague gesture to the painting they drifted over to. A sailor about to fuck a mermaid.

"Everyone starts somewhere," Hannibal traced his own fingers across Will's lower back until it rested comfortably on his waist. He steered them to the next one, where they both went rigid.

The painting was a Birds Eye view of an eye. The pupil was a single, curled body, painted with excruciating detail. The iris branched out to more bodies hugging each other in naked embraces, a cascade of gangly, but well executed, color palette. Both the men leaned close to the unexpected gore as if the painting was a magnet.

"What admiral artistry," Hannibal mused aloud. He swirled his wine in excitement, trying not to let the taboo emotion show to his companion. Not that Will would notice anything right now anyways.

He stared at the painting with glassy eyes, as if Will could see past the brushstrokes into the very mind of the painter. Like the eye in the painting was the window to the creature's tortured soul. Hannibal desperately wanted that gaze back on himself.

They lingered there a moment, one in mute horror and one in fascination, until a man stouter than Will approached them with shy regard.

“I’m thinking of recreating it on a bigger scale. I haven’t decided the medium,” James shifted from leg to leg, obviously excited to find someone he assumed saw the vision as he did; for someone to not only see but to appreciate the artistry. Hannibal could understand the need for acceptance as Will took a protective half step closer to Hannibal.

Will’s eyes filtered over the man in a searing gaze. He realized, as Hannibal had, something was inherently sinister about Gray’s eye for art. It excited Hannibal. Will gripped Hannibal’s back a little tighter, rigid with the perceived threat of approach from Gray’s frazzled mind. A loyal dog.

“Do you have a business card Mr. Gray? I would love to view your art on a larger scale.”

Will slipped his arm from around Hannibal’s lower back in mute disapproval. What a flighty bird Hannibal was taming.

The agent turned away from the artists, choosing to haunt the foyer in solitude to observe the other art hangings.

James hurriedly handed Hannibal a creased business card with a tiny personal phone number and email address.

“I’m James. James Gray.” He said, shaky with the perception of acknowledgment. Hannibal did not point out he already knew the man’s name from the flowing signature at the bottom of the painting.

“Hannibal. Hannibal Lecter.” He tucked the card into his breast pocket, a weary distracted gaze following Will as he continued to put distance between them.

“It is nice to meet an art consumer with such good taste,” James grinned, attempting to grab Hannibal’s attention again. Will’s ass was hard to contend with though.

“I have a feeling we’ll be in touch Mr. Gray. I enjoy the same eye for design as you do,” Hannibal smiled knowingly, watching the spark ignite in James’ eye. Good. He understood what Hannibal was.

“I—“

“If you’ll excuse me, I am going to rejoin my browsing partner now,” Hannibal smiled. James’ freckles scrunched with his nose in childish frustration, but he relented.

“It was wonderful to meet you,”

“As you, Ah, I want to buy this painting before someone else has a chance to first,” Hannibal reached for his back pocket, taking out a small checkbook and scribbling numbers across it. Unceremoniously he ripped the paper and stuck it out to the gaping man.

“Sir this is… much more than the listed price…”

“Use it toward your next project,” Hannibal’s eyes held the weight of a starving tiger, “I can hardly wait to see it. I doubt my partner can either,”

Hannibal drifted away before James could strike more conversation. His back felt empty without the weight of Will's arm there.

"Have I done something to offend?" Hannibal slid next to Will like a puzzle piece completing an image. Will swirled his wine, pretending to scrutinize the painting of a very detailed horse.

"Dr. Lecter, why do you assume I'm offended?" Will glanced to Hannibal, mouth in a hard line and eyes rounded with reluctant fondness.

In this moment Hannibal could stare at Will forever. Never had someone made him so desperate to dissect every part of them while also weighing his heart with a need to protect and possess.

Ever since *the incident* of his childhood he couldn't make himself feel at all. As he had eaten his sister, he'd eaten his own heart and soul, leaving behind the starving ghost of today.

The very sight of Will filled him. The conversations, the innuendos, the quiet cat and mouse calculations all melted like butter braised veal on his tongue.

He was so happy.

It scared him sometimes.

"You separated yourself from me. Tell me, has that worked for you in the past? Just leave when things upset you?" Hannibal didn't know why he was pushing. They both knew why Will walked.

"It doesn't work on you," Will said with a soft infliction. "Leaving, I mean. You always come after me,"

Hannibal placed a hand to Will's neck, wishing it was a brand, wishing he could keep it there forever. Reverently, like a believer to their cross, Hannibal kissed Will.

And Will kissed Hannibal back, like a dog licking its wounds.

***

Wolfgang swept the gallery floor. Rich people were such pigs, I mean the trash cans were *right there* , and they just left their cups and wrappers everywhere.

"Here to pick ya up~" Wolfgang's girlfriend cooed from the doorway.

"I'll be right out Sage,"

"How did the opening go?" Sage plopped in the receptionist's desk and spun in the chair.

"We sold a few. Ready to go?" Wolfgang smiled and knotted the last trash bag. In all honesty the night had exhausted them.

“Did that hot European guy come through? The one with the sexy name and accent? I’ve been dying to see him in person…” Sage linked arms with them. Wolfgang swatted her arm.

“Don’t talk about Dr. Lecter that way!” They dropped their voice, as if Hannibal might hear them even when the gallery closed an hour ago, “God he is hot isn’t he?”

“ *Stark raving* sexy darling,”

“Well he’s off the market now. I guess we’re both disappointed. They even had matching sweaters,”

“Were they here? Oh please tell me we lost the good fight to someone equally European and sexy,”

“Oh *he* is hot alright, but southern as the day is long. That reminds me, you owe me $20! I told you Dr. Lecter was queer too,” Wolfgang sighed dreamily but scrunched their eyes in remembrance. Something had *always* been off with Dr. Lecter. Wolfgang felt this desperate urge to be close to him, but some instinct kept them from it. As if their unconscious knew something was wrong about the man. They’d felt the same vague feeling when Dr. Graham had shaken their hand. The pair did seem well suited for each other in that aspect.

“I don’t recall that bet,” Sage played ignorance, snapping them from their thoughts. Wolfgang rolled their eyes to cover up their sudden shivers.

“God you should have seen him, he looked like he could ride a horse as easy as solve a crime,”

“Wolfie, you really like cowboys too much,” Sage shook their head in pretend disapproval.

“I do not—“

“Maybe I’ll put the cowboy hat on tonight. Just to get it out of your system. Since the gallery went well,” Sage winked up at them. Wolfgang swallowed.

“Yes please,” All thoughts of hot Europeans and their southern boyfriends left Wolfgang’s mind.

Chapter End Notes

The beginning where Hannibal talks about eating his brain, just a reminder that happened to a random cop in the Anthony Hopkins Hannibal movie!! Also, the song they discuss is a song in season 2 played as Hannibal kills and guts a trout. See where I’m going with my imagery…..
(I’m not mansplaining I’m just excited😔)

Pallas and the Centaur

Chapter Summary

Another ripper kill
More pining even though they're in a relationship
Whatever shall happen

Chapter Notes

I am a weirdo loser so I constantly check my bookmarks and what my lovely little audience is doing. Y'all KILL me with your summarizations please never stop.
"Barely dating" IM WORKING ON IT /lh

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will couldn't move.

He lay there, palms up, extremities spread eagle as something dark threw a shadow against his closed eyes.

It's only a dream

A sickening feeling flipped his belly as he suddenly wished he hadn't slept exposed in thin boxers. The shadow loomed closer, hovering just inches above him, mingling their hot breath together. Will's eyes moved rapidly, but his eyelids were glued shut.

Sharp points began to dig into his temples—claws, he realized—pushing past the top layer of skin. All he could do was whimper as the nails continued to slice past skin, meat, and bone.

The being didn't speak but Will could hear it all the same.

I want to look inside.

Then it barked.

Will sat straight up in bed, shivering slightly from the residual adrenaline of a night terror. Winston spun circles around the floor, barking excitedly that Will had awoken from his pitiful state.

"You're a good boy Winston," Will ruffled his fur, "I'll have Hannibal make you some more of that jerky soon,"

As if in understanding, Winston did one more circle before leaving for the living room. Will licked his lips.

03:45 AM, his clock mocked.

Jack: call me when you read this. Ripper. his phone mocked along with it.

Instead, Will peeled the soaked towel off his sheets and got into a furnace hot shower. The pain set his teeth on edge, but woke him better than any coffee could while simultaneously relaxing his taut muscles.

Before embarking on the day, he sat with Winston on the floor, his head rubbing into the soft fur. This was a new morning routine to mingle their smells over Hannibal's expensive cologne because Will knew it would piss the guy off.

"You know I would kill for you right?" Will gazed into Winston's black eyes, forcing sincerity into his hoarse voice. Winston merely looked back, tail wagging and head cocked with faux understanding. Another 30 minutes of clarity allowed Will to throw the ball for Winston outside. He begrudgingly sat in his car and dialed Jack after downing two asprin, an exhaustion headache already imminent.

March air was beginning to cut him some slack on the cold, producing a light jacket instead of his usual suffocating one. Will hated the cold.

"Mmhm?" Jack answered after two dial tones.

"You said to call when I read the text. Just read it"

"At five in the fucking morning?" Jack sighed, but continued as Will gave no apology or explanation.

"Ok ok. I'll be there when I can be," the line went dead.

Will knew it wasn't safe but… his brain drifted away for the thirty minute drive. The Ripper had gone back to his normal routine after the sudden Christmas slaughter, beginning a heavy hand of tableus with *The Bacchus* and then going silent for months at a time. Even though they were going back on track, only two months was still pushing it close to time.

Will worked his lower lip, not noticing the breaking of skin under the pull of his teeth. He could no longer deny the signs.

The Ripper was *changing* .

Whether it was an evolution to a higher plane (nearly impossible. The Ripper was practically a demi god) or an escalation soon to devolve into capture (just as impossible. The Ripper won't be caught that easily), Will was unsure.

Will parked his car in the office parking lot, his head making a dull thud as it connected with the steering wheel. Fatigue gripped his body, tugging his eyelids closed with dancing antlers within reach, edging closer to—

A knock jolted him awake, his face flushed with embarrassment as Jack cocked an eyebrow at him.

“Got you a coffee,” Jack grumbled, clearly still annoyed at the early hour. Finding the reason he was up so early was sleeping in his car probably didn’t help the mood. Will quickly got out of his car.

“Thanks,” Will coughed out, wiping sleep from his eyes. The coffee was burnt but woke him up.

Social battery reserves were still recovering after an entire weekend spent with Hannibal, Saturday fishing and the gallery while Sunday was lazed around Hannibal’s obnoxiously large house. Will had pouted in the mirror that night at the realization he was gaining weight from Hannibal’s constant feeding.

What was he? Some feral cat being tamed?

Still Hannibal had nearly frowned when Will left his home last night, several times convincing Will to stay a little longer with promises of desserts and home brewed beer. Will smothered the smile about to peak over the hills of his cheeks at the memory.

“—so if you want to hop in I’ll drive. Looks like the killer is back to their usual motifs. Are you going to want Dr. Lecter in on this one?”

Will flinched as he realized Jack had been speaking this entire time to him. He shook his head.

“No, everything is fine,”

It’s not that he *didn’t* want to see his therapist-boyfriend-sort of crime fighting assistant but they’d spent the entire weekend together.

Separation makes the heart grow fonder, right?

I don’t want him to get tired of me

Though, Will would trade him for Crawford anyday.

“Maybe call Beverly” he tacked on as he slipped into Jack’s passenger seat.

****

Will felt a chill run down his spine, the pendulum swaying in tune with his steps around the bodies.

This one was… *intimate* . It nearly caused a blush to dust his cheeks.

Pallas and the Centaur— or a version of it—stretched out before him, dew still frosting the victim’s eyelashes.

The woman staged with ridge posture, one hand still locked around the young man's worldly curls in a yanking motion. The other was looped around her standing axe (yes a real axe) as if at any moment it would chip the kneeling man's head clean off his shoulders.

Though he was missing a horse body, Will could *see* the vision as if he'd done it with his own hands. The bow beside the man was broken into three pieces. His only weapon, his only defense, destroyed by fate itself. The shadow of the axe yawned over the pieces as if to prevent it from reforming.

"Submitting your reason for passion my dear Ripper?"

It wasn't even the worst part. The flowers.

God the flowers.

Twisting around her axe were delicately positioned blue bellflowers, hanging their heads in mute disapproval at the scene laid before them. From head to toe the woman was covered in white flowers with jutting yellow tongues, mocking Will and his lesser knowledge of flower symbolism. Some were even woven into her light brown hair that swayed in the breeze.

As the viewer— *because how could I forget? The Ripper always performs for an audience*— followed the trail to her outstretched arm, the flowers tapered off, revealing fingers woven with curls and catchfly. The soft purple flowers stood out against her pale skin.

Sweet Williams catchfly , Will recalled one of his high school flings saying so. They were obsessed with the botany and flowers so presented Will a small bouquet of them to ask him to prom.

Will approached closer, studying every ridge and valley of the two victims. Another anomaly. The Ripper gave them two victims for one display.

Finally tearing his gaze away from the woman, Will switched to the man on his knees. Thin fingers hovered over the deep green ambrosia ragweed crown, a large leaf of it covering the man's left side of face so his gaze could only look to the woman holding his hair. His right was missing, a green carnation stuck in his empty socket.

"Don't want your love to look away from you?" Will mused aloud. The rest of the man was weaved in a similar fashion as the woman, except he was covered in that ambrosia. Reasons Will couldn't place, he scratched his arms, feeling as though those plants were suddenly crawling all over to choke him.

Instead of letting it fester, he kneeled down alongside the man, closing his eyes and *seeing.*

That's what it was, wasn't it? The Ripper *was* choking his interest in love, an obsession not easily quenched by mere contact. Even though the killer had it in their grasp, soul intertwined, they wanted more. The Ripper was going to own this one. No matter the cost.

Will took a deep breath, his head falling in his hands.

Whoever this was about was *totally* fucked.

“You almost done? The team is here,” Jack brought Will out of the deep feeling of being trapped *and oh so loved in that pretty golden cage.*

“Yeah I—hold on,” Will snapped his gloved nervously, the new angle revealed a deep purple coloring to the parted lips of the woman. He worked her jaw open tentatively, until a flower of purple rods bounced out of the tiny cavity.

“Ah Astragalus, used to convey *‘your presence softens my pain’* isn’t that romantic?” Price saddled up next to Will, pinching the flower between gloved fingers.

“And you know this because?” Will hadn’t meant for the bite in his voice to be added. He just wasn’t used to people encroaching on his Ripper-investigation time.

“I took an elective of *The Language of Flowers 101* back in University. Very enlightening class. Got me a lot of dates,” Price winked.

“What is all over the woman’s body?”

“Clovenlip toadflax. *Please notice my feelings for you,* ” Zeller chimed in, resulting in surprised faces from everyone except Price. Zeller scowled, “Jimmy made me take the elective with him,”

Will turned back to the woman, tucking some stray locks behind her ear with fondness he couldn’t place. In her left socket was another green carnation, her right still held an eye gazing down mournfully at the man on his knees.

“Ragweed? Doesn’t that one mean reciprocated affections?” Zeller frowned and turned to Price. Price shrugged.

“Maybe they think the object of their gaze has returned their uncanny favor,” Price gasped, “oh catchfly! I haven’t seen this since—“

“An invitation to dance. They’re inviting the object of their affection to dance,” Will blurted. Sweat began slicking his forehead. *No. This can’t be right.*

“Will you don’t look so good,” Beverly pointed out with a concerned tone.

Jack snatched a blue flower off the woman’s axe.

“What about this?”

“Unwavering love,” Price provided, his face going slightly pale. “Bit of a romantic aren’t they?”

“And green carnations are…” Zeller looked to Price.

This can’t mean what I think it means

“Romantic affection between two men, made popular by the use of Oscar Wilde,”

Who else could he be speaking to? I'm the only one that understands him

"So we know the Ripper is a man," Jack clapped with enthusiasm, "

You pig, you have no idea what this means, you deserve to be—

"Will? The hell is going on with your face?" Jack scowled.

No you don't see him. You insolent worm, I see *him, I see who he is under that immaculate person suit.*

Will willed himself to speak, opening and closing his mouth but no sound came. He tugged on his mop of curls to try and ground himself, but it only brought stark realization to the similarities he had with the kneeling man.

Why? Why as soon as some normalcy happened— a stable relationship, good connections with friends, a dog even—some fucking serial killer was processing fascination with him?

And why was it the one serial killer Will was equally fascinated with?

The corner of his vision darkened slightly. The ground was steadily approaching him.

"Will!" Beverly clapped hands on his shoulders, shocking him back to the present, "breathe,"

Will took a deep breath in and out, opening and closing his mouth again like a toad catching flies. His clothes felt strangling, the very air slicing his skin while he tried not to have a meltdown.

"Should I—" Zeller took a step toward them but Beverly held up a hand.

"Don't touch him,"

Will sank to the ground, laying his forehead on his knees as they pressed to his chest. Unsure how long he sat there, Will only looked up once his breathing evened out. Beverly was jabbing a finger into Jack's chest, which brought a small smile to Will's face and a grimace to Jack's.

The next time he opened his eyes, Beverly was standing over him tapping her foot. If it were anyone else he'd think she were being impatient, but Beverly only did this tic when really nervous.

"Let's go. You haven't eaten today have you? It's already past 2pm Will," she voiced it like a question, but Will knew it was more of a command.

He knew what she was doing. Ignoring his near meltdown after finding out a serial killer might be stalking him was just what he needed. He was thankful how well she knew him.

"Ok," he croaked, brushing his pant legs off as he stood. Her hand hovered over his back, not touching, but there in case he titled to the side. She blasted the air once inside her car hoping to ground Will further.

After a beat of silence, the three agents shrinking in the rearview mirror, Beverly spoke over the drumming of her fingers.

“Is Burger Queen ok for lunch?”

Will nodded, pressing his forehead to the car window. Was it really already past 2pm? Where had the day gone? Didn’t he just wake up? Just get in the car with Jack? Just arrive to the scene? How long had he been mesmerized by the gore?

Scenery whizzed by his tired eyes as the car picked up speed.

What was he going to tell Hannibal?

He checked his phone, grimacing that it has been on silent all day without him noticing. A single text blared back at him.

Hannibal: Good morning. Tell me about your day when you get a chance.

Will’s insides twisted into knots.

He didn’t deserve this. Any of it.

Didn’t deserve the freak of a serial killer or the normalcy of a boyfriend

“Should I call Hannibal?” Beverly suggested as she watched Will from the corner of her eye. She smiled, “Maybe you want some of his cooking instead?”

“Please don’t call him. He’ll never let it go if he knew I skipped his homemade lunch for fast food,” Will joked, feeling tension slide off his shoulders like water out of a small glass. Urgency was tucked in his tone, though he’d tried to keep it out.

Beverly nodded but donned a sad shine in her eyes. She always did have a near perfect record of reading Will’s mind.

She knew what he’d do next.

****

Hannibal listened to the crying woman drone on about how much better Randall was with renewed stability offered from his sessions. Distractions clawed at his mind, an unusual pestering from his constant state of control.

He wanted to know if Will had seen his new piece yet.

What Will thought.

If Will had seen it or *seen him* .

“He’s doing much better in college. Engineering, can you believe that?” She wailed.

Hannibal could believe it since he'd been the one to suggest the major. Once Randall had a handle on his intense body dysmorphia and crippling identity crisis, the boy had a mind for mathematics and equations, easily designing a metal suit in the shape of a predator. For now it was all paper, but Hannibal surprised himself by being excited for the final project to be complete.

A deep seeded urge begged him to point out that the woman could hardly recall the boy's age just sessions previous. To point out her deepest fear was being a bad mother. To point out that deepest fear *already came true* .

Instead he smiled and listened and nodded and secretly thought about his boyfriend.

"Mrs. Tier, it is 6 o'clock now, unfortunately I will have to resume this enlightening session next week,"

He ushered the woman out, never one to forget a friendly smile until she left the waiting room. Desk drawer flying open, he gripped his phone like a lifeline out of the dreadful *boring* ocean he was drowning in. Just moments ago it had buzzed. He knew he had heard it and it took all his self control not to kick the woman out the moment it had.

Beloved [5:56PM]: come to my house tonight. Wanna talk

Unease slithered in Hannibal's veins like frozen slush.

Will can't have possibly figured it out yet… right?

As much as loneliness clung to Hannibal like a winter coat, and even with blissful knowledge Will would one day accept him and the agent's own dark nature, he didn't think Will would be ready for the *entire* truth yet.

His fingers tapped in increments of three against his iron pressed pant leg. What would they need? If Will knew *everything* now then Hannibal needed to make preparations for them to flee tonight. Luckily he had properties across the world with an emergency medical bag in his car. If worse came to worse he'd move Will unconscious with light sedation. Nothing he hasn't used before.

Hannibal sucked his teeth to the empty room. He'd have to think on the fly to take Winston with them, the alternative being Will crashing a plane or wrecking a car before he left that damn dog behind.

Love was full of sacrifices.

His phone shook again to grab his attention.

Beloved [6:02PM]: Bring dinner

Hannibal smiled and grabbed his coat. The hour drive to Will's house would be a tense, pondering one.

Having a boyfriend was so fun.

****

Hannibal congratulated his luck at already preparing a rude IT technician to slow roast while at work today. He quickly gathered some readymade sides, a few pieces of homemade bread, and a simple dessert he'd been wanting Will to try anyways.

The drive hasn't been as dreadful as assumed, it gave Hannibal plenty of time to muse over the past weekend after all. In all, the doctor had a pleasant time even while fishing. Sunday was meditative and confirmed there was hope for a domestic life to the beast zipped up in his skin.

As long as that life was with Will.

He trespassed along the yard, surprised to see Will pacing the living room and not there to greet Hannibal outside per their tradition. As soon as his leather clad shoe hit the first porch step a shrill alarm sounded in the sound of a … rooster crowing?

Will nearly lept out of skin, allowing Winston to barrel outside as Hannibal slithered inside.

"Sorry if it startled you, I had to see if it would work," Will mumbled. The agent was pale, his shirt sticking to his sweaty frame, dark circle framing the intelligent blue of his eyes. Hannibal was slightly annoyed. He'd just gotten his love on a proper feeding schedule that would add weight to the tired bones of his frame, a sleeping pattern that worked with his schedule and work, and it looked like he'd been run over by a truck the day after he'd left Hannibal's sight.

"Is there a particular reason for the added security?" Hannibal feigned ignorance as Will took the bags from his hands.

Will licked his lips.

"Let's eat first. If you don't mind," Will scratched the back of his neck, his brittle voice indicating he hadn't been drinking water or speaking for hours.

"Whatever you'd like," Hannibal smiled and arranged the warm food on mismatched plates.

Will complimented the food easily enough, but eyes of a trapped animal kept glancing toward the door like at any moment someone would crash in to disturb their evening.

Dread latched Hannibal's throat like the jaws of a predator. *Did Will figure it out? Is the FBI coming? I left no evidence…*

Hannibal's hand closed around the knife to his right.

"Waiting for someone?" Hannibal asked, voice honeyed in nonchalance. Will flinched. Hannibal held the knife tighter.

“There was a Ripper kill today,” Will shoved the asparagus around as Hannibal made a small mental note, *another one of Will’s food preferences* . No meat graced either of the man’s plates. Hannibal made a noncommittal noise.

“I-he- I think *The Ripper is in love with me!”* Will blurted, his face hung in his hands, ears brightly burning in embarrassment. Hannibal blinked several times. Before Hannibal could dole out a witty or philosophical reply, Will barreled on.

“I know what you’re thinking, ‘what? The ripper can’t love and even if he loved someone, why some freaky *FBI agent?* ’ And I have the same damn questions for that murderous little bastard!” Hannibal watched Will launch from his seat to pace again, making exaggerated expressions as he spoke.

“I couldn’t even tell Jack or Beverly, I mean how embarrassing is this? ‘Oh? Will has a new Ripper theory?’ ‘Oh yes Jack I just assume the most notorious killer ever is not only stalking me, but making *kills to talk to me* . You know because I have so much to offer with my life falling apart every two months! No, no extra security needed! I’m sure this is just a fling because that’s what the Ripper is known for, not his long, drawn out, perfectly planned kills!” Will began to breathe heavily as emotions clogged his throat. He spun around to Hannibal.

“Say something!”

Hannibal opened his mouth. Will held a hand up.

“No, don't say anything. I know what you’re thinking, how can you date someone being stalked by the most powerful, elusive killer like ever? I can’t blame you for wanting to break this off, I mean I would in your shoes,”

Hannibal’s eyes darkened at the suggestion. He tapped his manicured fingernail against the wooden handle of the knife as he stood. Break up? Not unless one of them dies. Will sunk to the floor in a sudden display of defeat.

“The worst part? I feel fucking *honored.* Isn’t that shitty? Some douche makes people into meat pies and weird, symbolic art and all I can see is the beauty he makes. All I can see is the art and *love* each kill is adorned with. He’s all I think about. God it’s like he’s crawled into my body and won’t *leave me alone* . No matter where I go he’s there to keep me company, has for years, and now I don’t know if I want to kill him myself or talk to him,” Will clawed at his chest, leaving red marks along his neck in their wake, as if trying to rip the killer from his skin. Hannibal reached his destination, glowering down at Will from his lofty pedestal the man seemed to place him on.

“Am I crazy?” Through his eyelashes he gazed at Hannibal’s magnetic stare. The hunter carded his thin fingers through prey’s savage curls, gripping them tight and—as if possessed —reached for an axe not there. He needed to cut away this man’s defenses even more. Tempted to fit his hands around Will’s throat like a collar, Hannibal felt he reacted very maturely restrained as he pounced on Will’s kneeling frame instead.

“What are you—“

Hannibal shoved him to his back, cupping Will's head with his own hand so it wouldn't connect against the hard floor. Wood bit into his knuckles, but Hannibal couldn't feel a thing other than Will's cracked lips parting to allow Hannibal entry. Inside was hotter than a stove burner, the heat laced in his lover's mouth, velvet ridges the perfect texture as he traced the roof of Will's mouth with his tongue. It reminded Hannibal of a cold winter's night spent in the safety of a fire's welcoming heat.

Even as Will closed his eyes, hands roaming to guide Hannibal's shirt up, Hannibal couldn't look away.

Starvation screamed at his chest and stomach, hungrily he observed Will's cheeks redden, his mouth part at certain places, his left eye twitch when he shuddered, Hannibal watched it all to try and sate the desperate beast inside.

Nipping at the dry skin of Will's lips had small traces of boiling hot blood seep unto Hannibal's imposing lips. The taste caused him to involuntarily grip onto Will's shoulders.

He wanted to pry Will's eyelids open and make him watch as Hannibal ate him piece by loving piece. Of course starting at the extremities, Hannibal must take his time, savoring every morsel of the most perfect meal he'd ever get to have.

Pressing harder, Will groaned at the action of Hannibal leaning all his body weight down with calculated cruelty. Never had he wanted to protect someone as badly as he wanted to eat them.

Hannibal wouldn't even cook him. No, he'd eat it all raw, devouring until he was so full his human suit couldn't fit any longer. Consuming until he was as much of Will as he was Hannibal. They'd never be apart, no, they'd understand each other because they'd take in the very marrow of each other's bones.

Wouldn't it be funny? To feed each other a bite at a time until one fell over dead from the loss of body, and the other falling in tandem from loss of soul?

"Ack! Hannibal you accidentally bit my tongue," Will rasped, his eyes hardly open to half mast. Hannibal begrudgingly peeled himself off Will's body.

"My apologies Will. I just needed you to understand how *against* breaking up with you I am," Hannibal smirked without teeth. Those might come in later.

Will hesitated, obviously thinking over the kiss but also weighing the risk of The Ripper. He sighed

"Hannibal you don't understand—"

"Do you want to break up with me?" Hannibal held him down at the shoulders, playful as a triumphant cat. Will's brows furrowed.

"Of course not. But this is—"

“Then I’m ignoring your request for breakup,” Hannibal nuzzled where Will’s shoulder met his neck, silently wondering if he could get away with leaving a hickey there.

Will laced his hands over Hannibal’s back, relaxing under the deep pressure of another person’s weight. After sometime he spoke, albeit softly

“I don’t want anything to happen to you because of me,”

“I won’t let the Ripper dictate my life. If he wants my partner he’ll have to fight me for him,”

“Hannibal, that's not funny,” Will sighed. “I’m not sure you’re comprehending who we’re dealing with here,”

“I know the Ripper better than you assume. I won’t lose against him,” Hannibal looked at Will now, his chin resting on Will’s sternum because he knew the position hurt the man beneath him. Will’s watery eyes held his unflinching line of sight for once.

“Is there no way to convince you? To convince you to leave me for your own good?” Will searched Hannibal’s face for resignation, only finding a sharp tooth grin.

“A certain detective enlightened me recently that I’m a bit pig headed,”

Will stroked his cheeks then, clasping them hard enough to bruise though Hannibal doubted he realized it. The next moment their lips were once more sucking possessively over each other like a drowned man gasping for air.

“Thank you,” Will rumbled.

“I assure you Will, though you seem unable to accept it, the pleasure of you is all mine,” they stared a moment longer. Will’s eyes glazed over.

“Are we about to have sex?”

Hannibal blinked at the bluntness then barked a laugh.

Though he wanted Will in *every* way feasible, Hannibal did want their first time to be something Will would recall fondly, and right now the man could hardly keep his eyes open. Those vulnerable eyes were so tempting….

“We can if you want, but you honestly look half dead. How about we sleep, hmm? I’ll let Winston back in,”

Will slumped to the floor, eyelids falling shut as Hannibal sauntered over to the door and whistled. In thought, Hannibal looked to his car and wondered if he should acquire the medical bag. The night was still young with the air of escape possible.

Winston barreled in, collapsing onto Will as soon as the mutt noticed he was on the floor. The last bit of tension eased from Will’s muscles as he let out a genuine laugh. Hannibal softened.

The bag was unnecessary for tonight.

“Will, please don’t tell me you plan to sleep on the floor,” Hannibal offered a hand down to Will.

Will smirked.

He clasped Hannibal’s hand for help.

****

When Will drifted to sleep, the comfortable weight of a warm body pressed his psyche down like an orange on a juicer. Sure he couldn’t move again but the dream was kinder.

The shadowy creature grazed a claw over Will’s neck causing goosebumps to litter his body. It practically purred over him, once again mingling their breath in a cloud that belonged to just the two of them.

“Thanks for letting me look inside” it tapped his forehead like a caress. Lips brushed down his cheek until it hovered over his ear.

“I’ve almost caught you now. Want to know what I’ll do then?”

Will flinched, only able to wiggle his fingers a bare amount, hoping the creature would take this as a plea for information. It must have gotten the message, the smile evident in its tone of voice.

“I’m going to eat you of course,”

Chapter End Notes

This wiki is where I got this inspiration for the Ripper kill :3 although I tried to write it where you didn’t need to

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pallas_and_the_Centaur

There. Now Will and Hannibal have “slept” together *cackles at myself*

Hive Mind

Chapter Summary

A new killer emerges
One bed trope meets manipulation kink (?)

Chapter Notes

I'm genuinely tweaking for the last month trying to watch my little bee killer episode (one of my fav fucking killers) and my wifi and service literally won't let me. I finally just get this shit on DVD. storm fucking takes my power out. Why is god homophobic to me?? As a thank you for all the waiting I want to publish one chapters today and one tomorrow, tho I guess it doesn't count since the second one is… just porn! Be sure to check tags!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Relax," she massaged a section of knotted shoulder, "this won't hurt near as much as you think,"

Katherine Pimms slid the needle into the neck's pressure point. There. No fighting back now.

"Alright darling, it'll all be over soon. This will be much more comfortable than the suffering you've endured."

Lloyd's breathing picked up as a longer, more slender needle entered his range of vision.

"Katherine?" his voice stuttered, dripping with a desperate hoarseness. Betrayal etched his face like the worry lines accumulated along the years.

"Shhhh. You'll love it with *them.* They always do."

Katherine positioned the needle at the corner of her patient's right eye. There was a quiet ecstasy to being apart of something greater, to know your suffering was worth something in the long run, to be a gear in an ever working machine.

"A little pinch and it's over." She cooed. A tear rolled down his cheek as he whimpered but she merely smiled.

"The last ones you'll ever cry my darling."

She shoved the needle in, straight and true to its mark. A skillful, practiced twist of the wrist and Lloyd felt arthritis no more.

All according to how it should be.
***

Will shoved his glasses up and rolled his shoulders. He should really see someone about these damn aching muscles soon. Maybe a masseuse? Never had he been accused of enjoying the touch of strangers. He focused back on the lesson. Will began clicking through his slides again.

“Biting can be a sexual ritual, but it can also be an intimate, platonic act of possession. It can be an animalistic way to humiliate and mentally subdue the victim while laying claim to that dehumanizing feeling. Though, in most cases, it is just some killer’s weird kink—“

“Alright class dismissed,” Jack barreled in, booming the command to startled students.

Will sighed at his lecture being interrupted. The psychology behind biting was actually one of his favored lessons.

“That means *get the fuck out* !” Jack’s forehead vein jumped out.

“Is there a reason you’re hindering the future of the FBI Jack?” Will said as he packed his things away. Obviously he wasn’t staying for long if Jack came in like that. Righteousness was written all over his face. Bella must not be doing well in chemo.

“We’ve got a case. Man found in a tree, no eyes—“

“Sorry Jack but that doesn’t sound quite special enough for my attention,” Will and Hannibal already had reservations to some fancy hotel restaurant and *Will* had reserved one of the hotel *rooms* in advance without Hannibal knowing. He was not missing this weekend.

“Parts of the skull have been carved out and filled with bees. They turned a *man* into a *beehive* . That’s ‘special’ enough, Graham.”

Will bit the inside of his cheek and roughly stuffed the rest of his items in his bag. After a deep breath he had the courage to say,

“All of these agents and not one of them can figure out any killers? I told you with … angelmaker.” The name still stuck in his throat like syrup, burning the scars on his forehead. “I’m wearing down Jack,”

“Will you’re saving lives, isn’t that the point of being in the FBI? The point of your *gift?”*

Will scoffed. It has never been a gift. Not when he was isolated from his peers, nor when his mother was scared of him or his father was always angry at him, not when it took Beverly years to be his friend and gain his trust, and definitely not when it took about three people telling Will that Hannibal enjoyed his company before he actually believed it.

“I need you on this Will. We have to leave now, before this killer hurts anyone else,”

Will felt his resolve chip. He'd just have to make things work.

"Fine. But Hannibal is coming too,"

"It'll be an overnight investigation, is it appropriate for your—" Jack made exaggerated motions in the air.

"Boyfriend." Will supplied

"—Boyfriend to be on the trip with us?"

Will smiled, a twisted, broken little thing, "You're right. I'll just stay home from this investigation since my boyfriend and I have had plans for this weekend for about a month."

Jack stuttered at this, went on for another 20 minutes about duty and innocence, then agreed to let Lecter come. Will sighed and dialed Hannibal. This news wouldn't be easy. Hannibal had never been accused of being low maintenance…

***

Hannibal slid the knife along the woman's abdomen, opening the flaps of skin like a map to be explored. Such exquisite coloring, he'd expect no less from a personal trainer. The woman's eyes fluttered but Hannibal quickly pinched her cheek.

"Miss Charlotte I do ask that you stay awake for this, please," Hannibal checked the cloth in her mouth. Secured but light enough for easy breathing. He really was too good at this.

Hannibal's phone buzzed on the metal operating table. Will's sleeping profile picture popped up with a chime of birdsong. The man hated calls, preferred text, so Hannibal didn't want to ignore it.

"Miss Charlotte I hate to be rude but I must take this. I ask you be respectful and not make a noise,"

Hannibal swiped to answer

"Hannibal speaking," he put his gloves back on, beginning to root around his latest trophy's ribcage.

"Hannibal…"

Oh he did like that tone.

"Jack called me in for an overnight investigation."

Hannibal accidentally squeezed Miss Charlotte's stomach a little too hard, she let out an involuntary groan.

"We have reservations this weekend." Hannibal stated with a level, monotone voice. He could hear Will sigh on the other line.

“I’ll make it up to you soon. I convinced him to let you come this weekend if you’d like to. We can still go out to eat—“

“Yes because that’s what you always do after staring at crime scenes for hours and vomiting in some gas station toilet. You go and eat filet mignon or beef wellington or salmon”

“Why don’t you go to our reservation without me? When I come back I’ll take a couple days off and we’ll go to any restaurants you want?” Will’s voice was strained with a mixture of defensiveness and obvious fear of confrontation. Now it was Hannibal’s turn to sigh.

“I’ll accompany you this weekend but I still believe you should take a few days off after this one. You have PTO for a reason” *and if those days off are spent in my company, why, it can’t be helped can it?*

“I will. Thank you for understanding Hannibal. One more thing…”

Hannibal made a noncommittal noise, cleanly beginning to cut away parts of Charlotte while thinking of what to pack.

“Jack is coming to pick you up… in three hours”

Hannibal stopped.

“You’re telling me I have three hours to pack for an entire weekend trip?”

Will hesitated, “maybe?”

“I’ll be ready,” Hannibal said through gritted teeth. This day just kept getting better and better. Will let out a sigh of relief.

“See you soon Hannibal”

Maybe it wasn’t all bad.

“See you soon Will,” Hannibal said as the line disconnected. He looked down at his half conscious victim and removed the cloth. Clean up would have to be in a time crunch now.

“Miss Charlotte, any advice on when your partner prioritizes their job before their relationship?”

“Divorce them. That’s what I did,” she coughed at the rush of air. Hannibal frowned as he removed her kidney.

“I’m not fond of that option. Shouldn’t I make him quit instead?” Hannibal placed the kidney in his metal dish to wash. He should have enough time to make Will something to eat.

“People don’t change Mr. Killer,” she said with malice laced tones, “if he was ever going to put you before a job he’d have done it already. Your boyfriend doesn’t sound like the type to stand up for shit” she spit.

Hannibal smiled, undeterred, and said “that’s a lot to garner from one phone call. Besides, we’ve known each other for less than a year, all will be so in good time. My dear boy is a bit of a skittish one. I’m taking it slow.” Hannibal made another quick incision along her liver.

“Does he know you’re a freak? Assuming not if he looks at crime scenes. Cop?” She said, her voice trailing off as she was beginning to succumb to the pain. Hannibal’s eyes slowly lifted from his work to her mouth.

“You know Miss Charlotte, that quick tongue of yours is what got you in this situation. Shall I serve it to my boyfriend, watching him unknowingly eat the tongue of the one that wished to desecrate him without meeting him?”

“You and your boyfriend can kiss my—“ Charlotte gasped for breath as Hannibal punctured one of her lungs.

“Oh my, you’ve caused me to be a bit irrational for a moment. I guess my darling just brings that side out of me,” Hannibal leaned closer, letting her dying, struggling breaths fill his ears.

“Isn’t that an exciting prospect?”

***

Will watched the scenery pass with a warm forehead against a cold window. This scenario was becoming common enough to be dull. Jack had an issue figuring out a “special” serial killer (when was the last time Will *hadn’t* consulted on a case?), Jack rushes Will out of bed or classroom—out of comfort, out of routine— and thrusts him into a dark place with dark monsters. Will let’s the darkness consume him until he corners himself— no. corners the serial killer he’s become— and ‘saves lives’. He gets a weekend to enjoy Winston. To enjoy Beverly’s snorts and Hannibal’s teasing touches and then he’s back in a black SUV, being hauled to a park where a man had no eyes and half a brain half a beehive.

It was … boring. From the small file laying in his lap Will had most of it figured out. The bee stings were covering something up. Hospital needles? Injection sights? Home medicine? The eyes would be something about the windows of the soul. The suffering of each person. The hive something about never being alone. Hive mind.

Will’s mind drifted to the Ripper’s latest kill. The flowers still bloomed every time Will closed his eyes, throwing the black and white world into color. He was ashamed how much he missed the Ripper sometimes.

“Will, you’ll get a headache if you don’t eat something. I’m assuming you did not eat breakfast… or lunch” Hannibal nudged the Tupperware container toward Will’s thigh. An appetite was the last thing on his mind.

Sliced meat accentuated eggs and peppers with fluffy bread on the side. Will stared down at it, wishing for Hannibal to stop looking at him with shining eyes.

Will sniffed it, wrinkled his nose, and pushed the food around.

“What meat is this?” Will marveled at the tenderness as the meat parted under his plastic fork.

“Pig.”

That was good enough for Will. He wasn’t picky. He had a sneaking suspicion that is one of the reasons Hannibal liked him

“You know I get headaches from no food too.” Beverly pouted from the front seat. Suddenly, she regretted calling shotgun as soon as they pulled into Will’s yard.

Hannibal snaked a hand across the middle back seat, lightly tugging Will’s worn trousers. Their combined luggage tousled in the back of the SUV to make just enough noise to be noticable, but not enough for Will to feel justified in complaining about. Of course Hannibal had the most numerous bags. Will didn’t mind it, his backpack between his legs the only supplies he needed for the weekend.

“I apologize Miss Kantz, I was unaware I’d be whisked away so heroically by my partner’s colleagues.” He turned to smile at Will, “though I am not complaining,”

Will rolled his eyes but felt the tips of his ears brighten slightly. He began shoveling breakfast into his mouth for an excuse not to respond.

“Graham,” Jack snapped two fingers behind him, handing the company card to Will, “book our rooms on the way there,”

“You packed us into a car without making sure we had somewhere to stay first?” Will snatched the card and opened his booking app.

“I was preoccupied rounding up my unwilling team and their +1s” Jack said with an edge of annoyance. Will kept his temper in check as he browsed shitty motels. His eyes drifted to Hannibal packing away the empty container.

The bureau could afford something nice this time. .

Silence saturated the car while Will browsed until Beverly turned around to him.

“Alright Will, fuck, marry kill. Brian, Jimmy, Jack,”

“Why am I always included in these Kantz?” Jack pouted, knowing his fate already.

“Well obviously killing Jack,” Will said without hesitation as he booked the reservations, not paying attention too much anymore. All the rooms looked nice enough.

“Is this a regular game between you two?” Hannibal raised his eyebrows with amusement.

“You wouldn’t believe how regularly,” Jack muttered, “and they always kill me!”

Hannibal held in a snicker.

“I couldn’t live with Zeller, so fucking him then marrying Jimmy. I think he’d treat me well enough,” Will said as he handed the card back to Jack.

“Have I ever been a victim of such a game?” Hannibal questioned.

“Well back when Will first—“

“Beverly…” Will warned.

“Oh come on Will, you guys made lovey eyes for months and you’re all official now. You think he’ll deal with your trust issues but not our game?”

Will pouted but said nothing, opting to gaze out the window in embarrassment. He hated when Beverly was right.

“Anyways, back then we had Jack, Chilton, you. Obviously Jack was our kill option,” Beverly peeked around, excited to see Lecter’s hints of smiles, “then I said marry you and fuck Chilton, since you’re loaded and Chilton seems a bit… of a quick shot?”

Jack coughed indiscriminately but kept his eyes on the road.

“Oh come on Jack. You can’t look at that guy and tell me he’s a good fuck,”

“I only have eyes for my wife,” Jack grunted and began sipping his coffee to avoid any more discussion.

“Thank you Miss Kantz but I’m a bit enamored with someone else” Hannibal said slyly. Will rubbed the bridge of his nose. Here it comes.

“Will said he’d fuck ya and marry Chilton.” Beverly grinned.

Hannibal’s eyebrow twitched.

“She is leaving out the part where I *said that because* I can beat Chilton in a fight and was gonna kill him for money on our wedding night” Will rolled his shoulders as Hannibal peered at him. Goddamn that man was eerie sometimes.

“Tell me Will, do I seem more of a one night stand type? I also have money to kill for,”

Beverly burst into laughter as Will went red.

“Hannibal, it’s just a little make believe game, how was I supposed to know we’d be dating short months later? Obviously I wouldn’t touch Chilton with a 10ft pole and especially not marry the guy,”

Hannibal said nothing, just continued to gaze at Will with a glint of hidden emotion.

“Hannibal, I just said that as a joke, it’s all a joke,”

“He did say that he wouldn’t be able to take you in a fight, but could take you from behind. If you catch my drift,” Beverly said unhelpfully

“Beverly I think you’ve spoken enough for the car ride,” Will gritted out. Though this seemed to sate the little wounded beast in Hannibal.

“I see…” Hannibal hummed, “this game is quite the insight. I might use it in my future couple’s counseling sessions,”

Beverly snorted as Jack shook his head in disbelief.

“For the love of everything Hannibal, *do not do that!”*

***

By the time they got there, Price was already excitedly collecting honey with his gloved fingers. Zeller was nodding along to his bee facts, collecting evidence while pretending to listen, as he did pretty much every crime scene.

Will surveyed the body, black holes stared back at him with uncanny calmness. Through the buzzing, the chatting, the noises of wood and little drizzle beginning, Will could hear it. The peaceful quiet he’d bestowed on this man.

“The killer… is trying to help them,” Will stealthily wiped a stray tear. Hannibal opened an umbrella for the slight drizzle starting, and huddled Will under there with him. Shoulders brushed and Will didn’t lean away, simply let them stay touching, spilling warmth to his cold psyche like sunshine.

“Filling their heads with bees is… helping them how? I mean bees are really cool, that’s why I told everyone to stop making them fly away. They’re critical to our ecosystem!” Price began again.

“Is that why you keep giving random facts like ‘the male ejaculates so explosively that the noise is auditable to the human ear’?” Zeller countered.

Will was a bit surprised. So the guy had been listening the whole time. He interrupted before they could get into it again,

“Check into the guy’s medical records once you’ve got an ID. See who he visits. This has the care of someone who sees him in pain, often,” Will’s hand shook slightly until it was enveloped in Hannibal’s warm hand.

“Will and I have dinner reservations, we’ll be taking our leave now,”

Will’s eyebrows rose as Hannibal tugged him along. Dinner reservations? When had that happened? They’d crossed a couple states to get here and Hannibal was only informed this morning. The doctor was smiling but seemed pissed about something. As if to read his mind Hannibal chuckled,

“You’re not the only one that can make reservations on a phone,”

Beverly wolf whistled as they left before Jack could make any objections.

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She walked up to the man staring at the sun. Her 4th grade class just had a presentation on this, the sun and its damaging rays. She only wanted to be helpful. Her mother always told her to be helpful.

“Sir, you’re not supposed to stare like that. The sun can hurt your eyes,”

The man turned at her voice, slowly and sluggishly, as if his body were stuck in invisible jello.

“Are you ok?” she fidgeted with the frisbee as the man took his time. Once he finally looked at her, well he wasn’t *looking* at all.

The frisbee hit the ground with a *thunk* and the air rippled as she screamed at the sight of the man. His eyes were endless black holes with a face littered in raised bumps.

He moaned, a guttural and tortured noise, and reached out to her. The only thing his ears could hear and use to orient himself was screaming right next to him.

****

“He is alive by pure brain chemicals right now,” Zeller shook his head.

“I mean he must be swimming in them to still be alive,” Price elbowed Zeller with a smile. Zeller furrowed his brows.

“I wouldn’t call this ‘alive’. Shit, he’s been lobotomized. So much for ‘caring’ about him like Graham said,”

“Got anything you two?” Jack crushed his coffee cup before throwing it away. He knew he shouldn’t have let Will go. This was the second victim so soon, and now Will or Hannibal weren’t picking up. Those bastards. Jack *needed* them.

“A pattern,” Price and Zeller said in unison, each shooting each other an annoyed glare.

“These bee stings are—“ Zeller began

“—hiding acupuncture or needle marks,” Price finished. He smirked as Zeller scowled.

“So we need to be looking into holistic medicine. Will was right,” Beverly broke up the stalemate. The men soured a little as she stole their spotlight.

“What are we waiting around here for? I’ve got a list. First one is a Katherine Pimms, acupuncturist Lloyd saw twice a week for his arthritis,”

***

Katherine spun the honey with ease, marveling at the way the thick substance cascaded down her spoon into her tea. She hummed when it touched her lips.

Something created with such love, peace, and harmony could be nothing other than utterly sweet.

A knock from the front door. Curious considering she had no further appointments today. She opened the door to three men, all holding up badges. Katherine smiled and beckoned them inside. Everyone was welcome within her doors.

“Katherine Pimms? I’m agent Crawford, but you can call me Jack. How are you today?”

“Hello Jack,” Katherine could see past his polite, gapped smile. Jack himself, or someone close to him, was suffering. No one could hide such a thing from her trained eye.

“When was the last time you saw Lloyd Roatman?”

“Well he comes here twice a week, Mondays and Thursdays, for assistance with his severe arthritis,”

“He was found recently at a park covered in bee stings and missing his eyes,” Jack said, awaiting a reaction of any kind. Katherine simply placed her hand utop his.

“So he was walking then? Pain free? Sounds as though he’s been cured of his life long aliment. Wouldn’t you do anything to relieve someone’s pain?”

Jack’s expression remained neutral but Katherine saw his eyes glaze over in thought. Once again her eyes had captured the root of someone’s problem.

“We’re not here to talk about me Miss Pimms,”

“My patients see me at end of life. Pain management. Well, I’m no god, I can’t make pain go away, but I can make it so it doesn’t matter. I protect them from hopelessness with my remedies. *That* Agent Crawford is what matters.”

“What does relieving their pain entail?” Jack spoke softly. The other man, the one with dark hair, floated around the room. He touched things with a gloved hand. Touched her honey.

“He couldn’t decide a dignified way to die. Isn’t it much nicer to die in a meadow with the companionship of many than to die in some hospital? The bees, they brought him clarity and comfort,”

The light haired one’s eyes widened, but he said nothing.

“So you left them in a field to die?”

“Left them? Oh Agent Crawford, I accompanied them. I quieted their mind. I muted their suffering. I care more about these people than anyone. I would never leave them.”

A hard knock was at the back door.

“What’s out there?”

She couldn’t tell which one had asked, she was too busy gazing toward that back door, wondering who would care for her small hive now.

“The people I’ve helped,” she smiled weakly, allowing Jack and the dark haired one to exit the room. The third one shifted uncomfortably, obviously not wanting to be alone with her.

“Do you like bees?” Katherine said. The agent licked his lips.

“I do believe they’re fascinating,”

“As do I. They should be protected, nurtured, cared for, loved.”

“Umm…”

“That’s what I do for them outside. I am their Queen”

Vomiting could be heard outside. The dark haired one came in, looking green and dazed. Katherine cocked her head.

“Are you alright?”

“Oh Jimmy… the back yard… the back yard”

Jimmy rushed over to him rubbing his back as the other agent continued dry heaving. Agent Crawford walked in, pale.

“Her patients. They’re all here,”

Jimmy looked through the ajar door, feeling his stomach sink as people with no eyes haunted across the backyard. They mumbled and groaned like zombies, drifting from one side of the fence to the other.

“Do you hear that?” Katherine said. All three agents faced her.

“Their silence”

***

“Hannibal I can’t pronounce any of this shit,” Will flipped through the menu. Honestly, he could hardly read it anyways, the lighting low with candles on each table.

“I can order for you,” Hannibal offered with a grin, taking the menu out of Will’s hold playfully.

“You seem in a better mood now” Will sipped his wine, carefully observing the man in front of him. Their phones forgotten in the car were a calculated, silent choice from both men. Jack ruined enough of their dates already.

“Eating is cathartic. Consuming is a way of life. Instinct. Eating with someone you enjoy having company with only heightens that comfortable feeling.”

The waiter came then and Hannibal ordered in some French before handing the menus to him. Will rolled his eyes but he could admit he was enjoying the drinks at least. He was trying to stop hastily writing off fancy restaurants since Hannibal seemed enamored with them. They were an undeniable fixture in Will’s future.

“So that’s it? You were cranky from being hungry?”

The waiter returned, placing a plate of oysters on the table, and disappeared just as quickly. Hannibal narrowed his eyes.

“I wouldn’t refer to myself as ‘cranky’. Perhaps exasperated” Hannibal smoothed his midsection. Will reigned in his amused expression as he reached for an oyster. He brought it to his lips and sucked, only when Will knew Hannibal had his full attention on him

“And what has exasperated you, Dr. Lecter?”

“I fear Uncle Jack is taking advantage of someone I care deeply for,”

Will set his shell to the side and fingered his wine glass stem. Only after gulping down the glass did he answer.

“I know how to stand up for myself, if that is what you’re implying,”

“I’m not implying anything. You asked what had upset me and I’m communicating that. Do you not remember shaking? Or how everyone was going to let you stand in the rain until I brought my umbrella out? Would anyone do anything for you if I weren’t here today?”

“I don’t need anyone treating me like a child. I can take care of myself,”

Hannibal indulged in his own oysters, holding Will’s gaze fiercely. Thank god the lighting was low as Will blushed slightly when Hannibal ran his shoe under Will’s pant leg.

“Will just because I care for you doesn’t mean I see you as incompetent. It means I enjoy seeing you well taken care of, preferably when I am the one providing that comfort,”

“I know,” Will sighed. Possessiveness crawled in his abdomen when Hannibal retracted his foot. Such an ugly thing rearing its head forced Will to avert his eyes. Hannibal didn’t deserve this side of him. Will continued,

“I’m not used to assistance being non-patronistic.”

The waiter returned with a bow, placing surprisingly simple dishes in front of the men. He took his leave after filling the men’s wine glasses again.

“You’ll get used to it eventually. From me at least” Hannibal smiled as he began to cut into what Will assumed was lamb. The therapist had an uncanny love for the tender meat.

Will looked down at his own plate. A halibut with some crust and purée coupled with a side of vegetables. Will couldn't help but smile too, Hannibal knew his tastes.

"Yes, I suppose I will,"

***

"No that can't be right," Will tapped his finger along the counter sharply. Hannibal shadowed behind him, enjoying the show of Will's aggravation. Dinner had of course been delicious, but Hannibal was ready to be in a more secluded place with Will now. The day drained him.

"I reserved a room with *two* beds,"

The receptionist widened her already strained smile, "I apologize sir, but your reservation has two rooms with two beds and one room with one. The other four guests have already checked into the other two rooms, so you'll check into the one bedroom suite,"

"Even if the room has one bed, why is it *that* room? I know I didn't reserve *that!* " Will begrudgingly ran his fingers through his hair, snagging the tangles his unbrushed mop accumulated.

"Will, this will not be the first time we've shared a bed. I think we can survive one more night," Hannibal placed a grounding arm on the small of Will's back. The agent ran his hands down his sweating face.

"Give me the key," he said to the receptionist through gritted teeth. Her shoulders slumped in obvious relief at Hannibal's intervention. As if he'd done it for her. Sharing a bed with Will was the exact opposite of a problem.

Will snatched his backpack— *only a backpack.* Hannibal could faint— back on his back and yanked Hannibal's suitcases along with him.

"Will we can get a cart for—"

"I can carry them myself!" Will threw over his shoulder, slamming the elevator button with his… shoe.

The things you put up with when you love someone

"Alright, I'm coming," Hannibal gave a courteous nod to the paleing receptionist and grabbed his last bag to join Will in the elevator.

The elevator began its ascent as Hannibal slipped inside.

"Can we admit that was perhaps an overreaction?"

Will remained silent, not facing Hannibal until the elevator door slid open. Hannibal switched tactics.

"Does sharing a bed with me cause that much distress?"

Will stiffened in the hallway, nearly dropping Hannibal's bags.

"You know that's not what I was upset about," Will turned back around, waiting for Hannibal to catch up with him in the hall.

"Fooled me," Hannibal smirked, arriving at the end of the hall first. Their door had a red handle. How interesting.

Will swiped the card, turning a bit red in the ears before saying, " *this* is why I didn't want the room,"

Hannibal Lecter was not someone easily surprised. If anything his life was predictable. Monotonous. Hannibal stopped dead in his tracks.

Rose petals trailed to the heart shaped, sinfully red bed. Above them was a mirror ceiling, outlined in overhead lights. There was even a *pole* in the middle of the room.

"They booked us a fucking *honeymoon* suite," Will said between the fingers covering his face.

"This is not quite what I was expecting," Hannibal took one more glance around, placing his suitcase on the nearby loveseat. Will let out a hoarse cough.

"Not quite what I thought it would be either," Will began swiping the rose petals off the bed frantically. Warm hope leaked into the pit of Hannibal's gut, pooling to form the stick sweet feeling of arousal. Will stretched along the bed to continue swiping along, his tanned skin contrasting the red of the bed.

"I'm going to take a shower," Hannibal said curtly. He gathered his toiletries and nightwear abruptly, locking himself in the bathroom.

Cold water cascaded down, cooling the internal heat that growled inside him like a shrunken stomach. Hannibal needed to calm down. This was an accident. Will wasn't ready. He couldn't afford all this trusting work to be thrown away by a moment of carnal desire.

After completing his night routines of moisturizers and creams, Hannibal exited the bathroom, feeling as light as the steam that accompanied him out.

"I can't get the TV to turn on," Will was fiddling with some remote, shoving in batteries roughly.

"I'm a bit worried what a room like this would be playing," Hannibal patiently took the remote from Will's tightly locked fingers, "Perhaps a shower will help your… crankiness,"

"You did not just say that," Will laughed, "Using my words against me now Doctor?"

"Sometimes using your own words is the only way I get you to listen," Hannibal kneaded Will's shoulder until he felt the muscles unwind. Will shook his head.

"Am I so easy to figure out?"

“Not at all. It is one thing I enjoy the most about you,”

Will wrapped a lazy hand around Hannibal’s upper thigh, leaning his cheek to the silk pants, gazing up at Hannibal.

“Dr. Lecter, are you admitting to being fond of someone other than yourself?”

Hannibal swallowed, trying to get a control on where Will was adamant about rubbing. He’d always thought the man resembled a bit of a stray cat, but this wasn’t the best time to prove it.

“I am admitting so,” Hannibal swallowed so hard his throat clicked. Will’s smile spread like melting butter.

“I better go get a shower,” Will unlatched his hold and rose from the bed, eye to eye with Hannibal.

“I think you better,”

Will gathered his own toiletries— *one bottle of soap and a toothbrush. Hannibal was speechless*— and made his own way to the bathroom. As soon as the door closed with a soft click Hannibal collapsed to the bed, holding a palm over his beating heart.

Surely that man knew what utter lust grew in Hannibal at the mere sight of him.

The sound of water running brought Hannibal to the present. Restlessness wasn’t something he was used to feeling, just to pass the time, he began putting the remote back together. Batteries slid into their designated slots with little resistance, and Hannibal clicked the green button. There seemed to only be three. An unlabeled red, green, and black one. How ill conceived.

The TV remained dark, but Hannibal heard something distinctly shutter on. He clicked it again. Nothing.

The moment he turned to shove the faulty remote back in the nightstand he saw what it actually controlled.

The wall in front of him, once frosted, was now clear. This wall was of course connected to the large bathroom, specifically the shower. Hannibal felt his eyes widen to an unnatural degree when he grasped what was in front of him.

Will’s naked form sat under the spray, eyes closed as he rubbed shampoo into the back of his scalp. He turned to the side slightly, beginning to casually wash all of himself. Fingers lackadaisically rubbed through the happy trail of dark hair, without warning that blue gaze fell on Hannibal, nearly making him scream in embarrassment.

Relief flooded through him as he realized it must be a one way mirror. Will merely turned back to the spray and Hannibal frosted the wall again with the red button. His heart hadn’t even beat this fast after his first kill. The remote was slammed back into that nightstand.

“Look what they give you complimentary,” Will emerged a moment later in his boxers and a fluffy robe. Hannibal sat rigidly on the bed, pretending to read a book with crossed legs and the blanket over his lower half. “Ready for bed?” The doctor gave a weak smile, shutting the book with a snap.

“Not quite…” Will crawled across the bed on hands and knees, stopping when he was just a breath away from Hannibal. The robe revealed a scandalizing amount of chest skin. Hannibal made a point to look at Will only in the eyes.

“Hannibal,” Will drew closer, lips hovering over Hannibal’s own, “let’s do it,”

“It?” Hannibal choked on the word. Who was this and where was *his* Will? The agent leaned in, pressing a soft kiss to Hannibal like the waiter laid out their appetizer. A promise for more.

“Let’s have sex,” he murmured. Will placed a loose palm around Hannibal’s neck, rubbing the adam’s apple and laughed lowly, noting Hannibal’s already raised lower half, “What better place to fuck you than the honeymoon suite?”

Chapter End Notes

Y’all I finally sat down and made a damn outline and this will be even longer than I thought. I’m assuming at least 100k words but for maybe even the 150-175 range😭🥲
buckle up
That 52 chapters is subject to change. Just a rough estimate according to my current outline ~
Also the fuck Marry kill convo is from chapter 5!

The Birds and the Bees

Chapter Notes

I have isolated any sex chapters to be all by themselves with no major plot points in them, for those that don't care for explicit sex :) please check the end note for a summary!

Lowkey disclaimer I've never written smut before go easy on me :/ I might not do it again

Tags: kissing, dom/sub undertones, handjob, blowjob, anal fingering, anal sex.
Sub!maschoist!Hannibal dom!sadist!Will (very light for now)
A little vanilla for their first time <3 still feeling each other out

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Would that be ok?" Will stared with half lidded eyes. Hannibal smiled, crooked and vulnerable, "Is that even a question?"

Hannibal let out a small surprised sound as Will took the lead and kissed him hungrily. Wandering hands appeared on Hannibal's neck, pressing him into place as if he'd run from Will's fervent adoration. Breath escaped the pair until they were gasping like drowning men.

Will pulled away, his lips shining and eyes burning, but his hands remained securely on the sides of Hannibal's neck. His Adam's apple bobbed as he swallowed.

"Top or bottom?"

Hannibal blinked at the bluntness, his own mind hazy and eyes half mast with lust.

"Hm?"

"I like being on top, but I enjoy both. Top or bottom?"

"Mmm I much prefer to be on the receiving end dear Will,"

Will chuckled, "Ever the eater, aren't you Hannibal?"

Hannibal felt his lips curl like a cat with cream. Will didn't wait for a response, reigniting their aggressive kissing and allowing his hands to wander to Hannibal's hips.

Hannibal bit his lower lips lazily, snapping the man out of his affection caresses.

"Are we going to fuck with our clothes on or will you undress me already?"

Will barked a laugh, throwing his head back in the most carefree expression Hannibal ever witnessed on the man.

“Oh Doctor, let’s not act like you’re dominant in the bedroom, ok?” Will nuzzled his neck, catapulting them both to lay on the mattress with suggestive creaking. Hannibal looked up to Will through his eyelashes, appreciating the man’s stout weight on his chest.

Powerful muscles coiling under these baggy clothes

Hannibal licked his lips as his fingers slid under Will’s flannel, slow and mesmerized with—

Hannibal *would* finish that thought, if the sudden cool air across his middle hasn’t riddled him in goosebumps.

“Will, were my silk pajamas a necessary casualty in this scenario?”

Will ignored him, spreading the ripped shirt to reveal Hannibal’s torso. Blunt nails explored exposed skin with reverence. Hannibal resumed his attempt at unearthing Will’s own torso.

“Ack— Will that tickles,” Hannibal’s breath caught as Will skimmed a nose through Hannibal’s happy trail. Teasingly, Will seemed to contemplate going lower— *please go lower* — before trailing teethy kisses up Hannibal’s stomach. Hannibal’s back arched off the bed slightly, chasing Will’s hot breath and sharp canines.

Thumbs pressed into Hannibal’s lifting hips as Will dug his chin into Hannibal’s sternum. He sucked his teeth in mock chastisement.

“Patience is a virtue, Doctor. You must be patient tonight,” Will said with a palpable husk in his voice.

“I’ve been waiting for six—“ Hannibal sucked in a breath as Will sucked his nipple, “— months,”

Will hummed in amusement but didn’t stop his work at Hannibal’s words. Unfortunately, Will’s strong grip kept Hannibal pinned to the bed, the man longing to rut his growing erection into something. Instead he focused on Will’s belt, for once Hannibal was appreciative of the man’s simple style as the buckle unsnapped without struggle.

Will moved to the other side of Hannibal’s chest, his previously warm nipple hardening in the sudden coolness. It wasn’t lonely for long as he released Hannibal’s right hip and used his idle hand to work the nub. Friction, coupled with a biting attack on his chest, caused a choked moan to wander out of Hannibal’s teeth. For a moment Will stopped as a realization kicked in.

“Hannibal,” Will purred, his hands beginning to slide in Hannibal’s waistband, “if I was paying attention, I’d almost assume you *like* it when it hurts a little.” Will nuzzled into Hannibal’s neck, never stopping the paced descent of the doctor’s thin pants.

Hannibal wasn’t one to be ashamed of his needs, especially his sexual ones, but Will had a way of making him hesitate where no one else would.

“My tastes in the bedroom lean a bit more maschoticstially,” Lecter prided himself on his constant clear thinking, but Will was rapidly stuffing it with aphrodisiac soaked cotton. He lifted his lower half in anticipation. Will left no verbal confirmation of hearing, but his eyes lit with a sadistic glean.

One swift jerk left Hannibal bare, Will making quick work to rip it right off his ankles and Hannibal making even quicker work of his already ruined shirt. Cool sheets kissed burning skin as Will took Hannibal’s length in his sweaty hand.

“Crying already?” Will referenced the leaking tip with a crooked smile, taking one dry swipe up the entire thing. Hannibal felt his lips part and his eyes flutter.

“You seem to have an uncanny effect on me,” Hannibal fired back, his voice cracking as Will sat up. Surely he wouldn’t be so cruel to ignore the bobbing dick now… right? Hannibal wasn’t *that* kind of masochist.

Will leaned over, reaching for the nightstand, effectively allowing Hannibal to gauge the size of—

Oh. *Oh.*

Back in Will’s time of sickness, his short need for supervision after the hospital stay, Hannibal had clinically seen all of Will and all of the nudity.

This excluded any sexual context, any erection or lust, he’d still been more of an appetizer at that stage. Hannibal wanted to sink his teeth in, but just to whet his palate, now it was different. Hannibal wanted all of Will in every context. The perfect feast.

Did it really get *that* much bigger when aroused? The outline was nearly teasing as it stretched Will’s boxers to the max. As a doctor Hannibal was nearly impressed. As a lover Hannibal was *very* impressed.

A sharp snap of a cap brought Hannibal to the present. Will drizzled freezing lube unto Hannibal’s scalding member. He began stroking a lazy pace with a tight circle of coiled fingers.

“Focus Hannibal,” Will placed his knees on either side of Hannibal’s hips, caging him in as Will leaned in for more capturing kisses. Hannibal obeyed, turning into boneless putty under Will’s constant attention. Holding on for dear life he wrapped his elegant fingers in Will’s wild curls.

Guttural moans ripped out of both men as Will shoved a finger through the tight ring of muscles without warning. Hannibal’s eyes fluttered open and closed as Will allowed him time to relax again. His handjob picked up speed, forcing Hannibal to grip Will’s forearms, lest he rip the curls right out of the man’s head.

“Shirt,” Hannibal begged, digging half crescents into Will’s clothed skin. Will mumbled, perspiration dripping unto Hannibal’s exposed chest as he continued to work the inside of Hannibal.

“In a minute,” Will pressed the prostate with precision, nearly making Hannibal howl. His grip turned bruising as Will worked his finger in and out over the bundle of nerves. Feral need tore Hannibal’s thoughts to shreds as he no longer waited to be *courteous,* ripping apart Will’s saturated flannel. Will let out another laugh and stopped the handjob enough to help work the shirt off. His hand returned to Hannibal’s thigh instead, possessively pressing the shaking muscles into the mattress.

“Most people think domination is *just* about pain,” Will began as he slide in a second finger, capturing the bundle between the index and middle digits, “not all suffering is physical pain Doctor,”

“Most people think submission is all about getting your ass whipped. Not all pain is suffering dear Will,”

“Even with two fingers inside you, you want to debate philosophically with me?” Will teased, swallowing Hannibal’s retort between his lips.

After an eternity of exploring each other’s mouths, Will added a third finger, reveling in the ridges of Hannibal’s insides. Spit connected them even as their lips parted, Hannibal making an angry huff at the separation but not at the pain of another intrusion.

Will spread his three fingers inside at the same time he took Hannibal to the root in his mouth. It hit the back of throat slightly, but it wasn’t too uncomfortable as Will began to bob his head in time with the finger fucking.

“Will I’m— *mother of god just like that*— I’m about to—“

Will hummed his acknowledgment and swallowed everything Hannibal released. Thigh muscles twitched relentlessly under Will’s unrelenting pressure, kneading the orgasm right out of him.

Hannibal pressed the heels of his palms into his eyes, willing his heartbeat to slow down. Until Will added a damned fourth finger.

“I’m not a teacup Will. Put it in,”

Will’s eyebrows raised even as his fingers didn’t stop moving.

“Hannibal are you sure? It hasn’t been very long—“

“What happened to ‘knowing I liked when it hurt a little?’” Hannibal said smugly. Will cocked his head like an amused animal, but his eyes were half crescents in anticipation.

“Don’t say I didn’t warn you,” Will took his fingers out, once again grasping Hannibal by the hips, this time flipping him over to lay on his stomach. Hannibal’s eyes widened at the shock from looking at Will to suddenly being face down in a pillow.

“Your strength surprises me Will. You keep it well hidden,”

“People underestimate the size of fish I reel from my backyard,”

“I assure you, that is not the only *size* people underestimate about you,” Hannibal smothered his face into the pillow to suppress his whine as Will stretched him like a wanton grin, even though he’d just assured the man he was ready for entry. Will dug his nails ever so slightly into the dimples winking on Hannibal’s back. His cock pulsed as skin nearly broke under the nail. .

“Dr. Lecter, I knew you were a bit reluctant to waste food but—“ Will squeezed his hips, burying the head in with a *pop* ,”—I didn’t think you’d devour me so quickly. Your other mouth likes to eat too, eh?”

Will leaned over, breathing warmly on the shell of Hannibal’s ear.

“I’ve been accused of gluttony before,” Hannibal panted out with a smirk. Sweat pooled in his back, nearly making him scream at Will to pick up the pace, even if it left him bedridden the next day. With Will’s size that could be a possibility anyways. Slight burning grounded Hannibal, but it was already turning into the sweet honey of pleasure-pain.

Will ran a cold finger down Hannibal’s bucking dick.

“Enjoying the hurt a little more than normal? Gluttony is a sin doctor,”

Damn those sharp eyes.

He swallowed the drool threatening to spill out of the corner of his mouth as Will slid himself in more.

“As is sloth, dear. Why don’t you get on with it? I can take it,”

A beat of quiet. A beat of stillness. Then electricity.

Hannibal clutched the sheets under him as Will sunk in all of himself. Zaps of pleasure and with the heat of pain coursed through him like blood.

Hannibal was constantly hungry, a starved beast, chasing the fullness of having a heart again. He’d eaten it once, his own heart with its straw colored hair and large, trusting eyes. After that meal nothing satisfied him anymore. His stomach ached much like his chest did. They were equally empty.

A calloused hand pressed into his abdomen, reminding him how full he was at the moment. This blissful pain twisted his gut to not only distract from the hollow missing components, but to replace them with pleasure that warmed him like a fire in a snowstorm.

“Ready for me to move?” Will removed his hand from rubbing Hannibal’s blonde happy trail. Hannibal could whine for the loss if he didn’t know what was coming after it retreated.

“Since the moments I laid eyes on you,” Hannibal tilted his head to the side to catch a glance at his beloved. Will glowed like a god, haloed in the small light adorning the ceiling. His curls were slicked back with sweat, eyes fierce with concentration, his smile like jagged glass.

Will leaned down, somehow burying himself— *feeding himself*— deeper into Hannibal. Hot breath ghosted Hannibal's right shoulder. A small flick of the tongue across taunt muscle. Hannibal nearly turned, asked Will what he was doing, but he never got the chance.

Teeth sunk into Hannibal's shoulder, eliciting a moan and near ejaculation from him. He shivered as air stabbed the fresh wound and Will licked any blood seeping from it.

Without reference to the sudden bite, the thrusting began. The pace was anything but gentle, animalistic in its brutality and utter *neediness* for contact, Will bruised Hannibal's hips with his iron grip.

Hannibal had never felt more wanted.

The hours passed with interlocked fingers and gasping breaths swallowed by the creaking of the bed underneath them. After they lay there a moment, sated and scrubbed raw by a shared shower, Hannibal watched Will sleep. His brows were furrowed until Hannibal held him close, nose to nose with limbs intertangled along each other's back.

Hannibal pressed along Will's spine, feeling each vertebrae.

Will relaxed, breathing deeply, finally calm.

For the first time in the years since *The Incident* , Hannibal felt full.

He was finally full.

***

Will watched Hannibal's sleeping form, moving stray pieces of hair along his forehead as the dawn's stray beams came through the window. The arm beneath Hannibal had fallen asleep hours ago, static in the weight of his head, but Will didn't mind it. He smiled.

It had gone according to his plan, more or less.

The moment in the SUV he saw the suite, he knew it was better than anything he himself could plan, especially on short notice of their cancellation from the previous hotel. He wasn't a very romantic man, why not let the hotel be romantic for him?

Small guilt did form over the treatment of the receptionist, but Hannibal couldn't know Will reserved them a honeymoon suite. So, Will had to take out his masking skills and play the part of the pissed boyfriend. A small price to pay for the reward he received tonight.

For someone so sharp, Hannibal fell into traps easily. Will made quick work of the remote's instruction manual and emptied the batteries on the bed. That narcissist couldn't resist attempting to fix what he deemed Will couldn't.

He'd given Hannibal a tease, an appetizer, in the shower. The reaction had forced Will to turn back around as he laughed, lest he allowed Hannibal to realize he was messing with him.

Will grazed the man’s cheekbone with a thumb. His fingers naturally trailed to the bite mark on his shoulder, red and purple already.

Will didn’t know how hungry he’d been until he’d had such a feast before him.

He pressed a light kiss between Hannibal’s brows.

It was a meal Will would have again and again.

At any cost.

Chapter End Notes

That’s right! Will planned the entire thing to get into Hannibal’s pants. Let’s not forget they’re very MUTUALLY obsessed and manipulating of each other <3

NORMALIZE SLIGHTLY LOSER HANNIBAL X CONFIDENT WILL IM BEGGING YALL THESE MEN ARE WHORES

A New Lure

Chapter Summary

The aftermath of last chapter
*
Some reconnections with past friends
*
Some forgotten toys played with again

Chapter Notes

Been depressed lately. Hopefully my boys will bring me out of it. That means the next few chapters are going to either be off course (fluff to make your teeth rot) or off course (angst to make your stomach hurt)

I think you'll see which one I'm leaning toward after this chapter

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Movement to his right. Hannibal feigned sleeping, knowing the sheets under him were not his own, his mind was still muddy from the night's rest. He sniffed first to take in his surroundings. The bed dipped lower and Hannibal caught the scent of the one next to him.

He lunged like a panther, snatching onto the person's arm with desperate strength, nails digging into their skin. Nothing could escape, he couldn't let it escape, *stay stay stay stay.*

"Mischa?" Hannibal's hoarse voice clawed out of his throat before he could swallow the name back down.

Will raised his eyebrows.

"Mischa? That the name of someone you're used to waking up to?" Will collapsed back into the bed. Tactfully, he did not mention Hannibal's very-untherapist-like grip strength.

"No" Hannibal let go of Will's arm and rubbed his eyes harshly. It was unlike him to make such a slip of tongue, but he'd swore he'd smelled her here. The haze of sleep uncharacteristically disoriented him, and the pain in his lower back brought him back to where he was.

“You still love them that much?” Will’s eyes were glazed and distant. As if being a replacement for someone else was a regular occurrence. As if he weren’t the most brilliant and unique man Hannibal had ever met.

Hannibal nuzzled his nose to Will’s pulse point. Inhaling deeply, he decided to reveal a lie and a truth.

“No, Mischa was my sister. The only similarities about you two are your hair and smell. We don’t talk anymore,”

“What do we smell like?”

“Like…” *you love me* “…snow and mountains,”

Hannibal hadn’t smelled this in years, in centuries, in eternities. He slid his hand along Will’s back, hardly stopping himself from crushing them together until they were one entity. Something fused and inseparable, melted into one candle to burn and flicker out together.

“We better get ready before Jack gets impatient. Not sure that if he saw this room you would be able to travel with us again,” Will untangled and stood, standing and flexing to shake the sleep away like a hunting dog. Hannibal allowed him to escape, other than their intertwined fingers, kissing them briskly.

“Won’t you allow me to lock you in my tower prince? I’ll play the fierce dragon if it keeps you away from King Jack,”

Will smirked, returning the kiss to Hannibal’s own fingers.

“Jack knows I slay dragons. He wouldn’t believe I let myself be captured by one,”

Hannibal unfurled from the blanket snaking along his hips and legs like a flower reaching toward their sun. After standing to their full height, Hannibal rested his chin where Will’s shoulder and neck connected. The smell was debilitating, addicting, and unnerving.

“I can be quite convincing” Hannibal’s hands drifted over Will’s lower back, assessing the strength of muscle there and wondering if Will would notice a missing kidney. Devouring him carnally, spiritually, and mentally wasn’t enough.

“Let’s get married,” Hannibal tested with a smile. Let’s devour him legally too.

Will’s body went rigid, “Hannibal that’s not funny,”

He shoved him away so they could look at each other’s eyes again. Hannibal tilted his head curiously. He’d been serious, but if Will weren’t ready he’d welcome the time to prepare a *proper* proposal.

“You’re crazy,” Will laughed, shoving Hannibal playfully so he’d fall back on the heart shaped bed. Hannibal allowed it, starfishing to bask in the lingering smell of last night’s embrace.

Through half lidded eyes he watched Will begin his daily routine with a small smirk.

“You have no idea,” Hannibal replied.

******

Hannibal gave the watermelon a smack. This one spent much too long on the vine.

Jack’s little adventure had left Hannibal’s routine behind. His weekly shopping trip has been postponed and his pantry laid bare. Will suggested *KFC* for lunch instead of visiting the local farmer’s market for supplies. Such a sinister abbreviation sent a shiver down Hannibal’s spine.

Thinking of Will, Hannibal scanned the surrounding area for the mop of ringlets and resting I-don’t-want-to-be-here face. Though Hannibal lightly suggested staying together, the man seemed to wander off no matter what. Will was investigating a pop up tackle shop with interest when a woman in cargo shorts and a leather jacket slapped him on the back.

Hannibal’s eyes widened as Will whipped around with furrowed brows and burning eyes. Watermelon hunting forgotten, Hannibal slipped through the small crowd like a snake to do damage control (or watch the damage unfold). Only when he got there… Will was *laughing.*

Not only smiling but allowing this strange person to *touch* and *hug* him. Hannibal felt his eye twitch. An ex?

“Ahh Carter, this is my boyfriend, Hannibal Lecter,” Will slid an arm across the lower part of Hannibal’s back once the man stopped beside him, “Hannibal this is Carter. An old fly fishing friend,”

Hannibal’s shoulder eased slightly at Will’s possessive hold. If they’d gone fly fishing together no wonder the man enjoyed their company. Surveying the tent now, many lures were wound with bright oranges, subtle pinks, and stark whites. Others were angry reds, deep blues, and even bruise purple. The woman tipped her baseball cap at Hannibal and stuck a hand for him to shake.

“Geez Will, knew you were a pretty boy but ya got a looker, eh?” Carter said after a firm handshake. Will scoffed and rolled his eyes.

“Don’t fan his ego,” Will said, but tightened the grip on Hannibal minusculey.

“Don’t act like a shy maiden now, I see the way you’re gripping him like some hawk’ll snatch him out of your stream,” Carter put a toothpick in her mouth, and sat down under the tent in a wooden chair that looked homemade.

“I thought I recognized these lures. You’re still crafting?” Will excitingly tapped his fingers along Hannibal’s side. Obviously embarrassed to be read so quickly by someone he respected, but not embarrassed enough to deny it or allow Hannibal a space without him. Eager as Will ever was to discuss a topic of great interest for himself, for once, Hannibal was happy to be a mute trophy piece next to his babbling god.

“Never quit. Only had to stop for my knuckles to heal when I decked that son of a bitch,” Carter snorted but grew more solemn as she scratched the back of her buzzed head, “how is Bev? She doing ok?”

A crooked smile snaked across Will’s face, “yeah she’s ok. Not seeing anybody either. When she gets drunk we still talk about you,”

Hannibal allowed the pieces to click into place. This is the Carter that Beverly regretted breaking up with. Heat crept up the woman’s neck as she grimaced.

“Does she?”

“She does” Will nodded, “you should text her”

“I’m not even sure I have her phone n—“

“It hasn’t changed. She made sure of that,” Will plucked a lure down that was so red it looked bloody.

“Whatcha buying that for? I know you make ones better than me anyways,” she batted Will’s money away.

“Should we buy them all?” Hannibal looked to Will. Food hardly satisfied Hannibal anymore, truthfully, he could live off Will’s reactions forever. Will seemed to jokingly contemplate it, but Carter stood before they could say anything.

“Now that’s not necessary, I’ll text her. Now y’all get on outta my tent before I split my knuckles on your chins too.” Cater nudged Will in the shoulder which caused the man to feign great grievance over their departure.

Hannibal stood in place against the tugging of Will for a moment longer, closely examining the lures as if he still wanted to buy some. Finally, he exited the shaded tent with Will back into the June heat.

“Nice to see ya found someone as pig headed as you!” Carter yelled after them.

*****

“ *You told her what?!”* Beverly lashed out and punched Will’s side harshly. He grimaced but took the pain in hopes that would stop Beverly from kicking him out of her lab. They wore their spit shields (as Will referred to them) as Beverly combed over a piece of bloody fabric.

“Watch the abdomen incision Bev,” Will rubbed his side like a wronged child

“You better be glad I don’t give you a new scar,”

“Come on, don’t act like you haven’t been wanting to see her again since you guys broke up”

“Yeah we broke up because she gave that guy stitches!”

“Because he was stalking you!” Will crossed his arms, “that guy is lucky I didn’t get to him first, the fucker”

Will didn’t mention that he still had a hole dug out for the pervert in the fields of Wolf Trap. Truthfully, Will didn’t know if he would have actually killed him or just scared him, but Will never came to that point. Carter found the ex hiding and nearly beat him to death in the Baltimore back alleys of a bar.

“I don’t know Will…”

“Do you miss her?”

Beverly peered at Will from her peripheral.

“It’s not that simple and you know it,”

“Is for me. Unfortunately, I’m learning that’s the only thing it takes sometimes. You think I wanna go to fancy ass restaurants on my time off?” Will tentatively patted Beverly’s back and sighed, “I don’t but I’d miss seeing him after work. Do you miss her?”

Do you think I don’t see the monster zipped up in that human suit?

Beverly flicked a piece of dry skin into a clear container, closing the lid with a click. Finally, she gazed at Will.

“Of course I miss her. Everyday since,”

Will smiled

“Then text her. I have a good feeling about you two,”

Beverly laughed, the corner of her eyes crinkling into the wrinkles Will always stared at instead of Beverly’s strong gaze. He never wanted to force the feelings out of her. She told him everything anyways.

“You’re just saying that because she’s a fly fishing nerd,”

“Better the girl that fishes than the man that prowls,”

*****

Miriam closed her eyes as the well cover opened and allowed the sunset’s beams to lick her face. It was hard to keep track of anything in the dark hole she’d been banished to for an eternity. The last time the man had visited her was at least a day though.

“Miriam? Would you like to come up for dinner?”

She wanted to say no, to shout until her voice went hoarse or rake her nails along the wet dirt until her head breached the well opening like a second birth.

But she'd tried all that before. She'd tried it so many times that it might as well be a broken record looping in the back of her mind. Only one thing had gotten her out of this hole before. And it only let her out if she were polite.

Miriam gazed to the sky above her, risking blindness from the sunrays to once again try and see the face of her captor, only to see his figure blotted out like ink. Everytime she did catch a glimpse the features were speared like wet paint along a canvas. Why even bother anymore?

"Yes," she replied after a pause. A long enough pause for the monster to be angry, but he never got angry with her. Not when she broke her nails or crawled out the cabin window or tried to cut him with broken glass or spit out his food. He wouldn't yell, just cock his head curiously and put her back in the well. No matter how much she begged, bargained, or threatened.

She always went back to the well.

"I apologize, the meal is a bit sparse this evening. My routine has been interrupted and I had no time to shop at my regular stores,"

Miriam said nothing, just took the spoon and clinked it against her fine China bowl (that seemed the only thing to ever make the monster shudder). The soup was scalding, but heat and blisters kept her busy, the mind sharpened with pain and nerves busy recovering. It was the only alternative to mind numbing boredom and helplessness.

"Do you like it?" The man asked every evening. Everyday no matter what he cooked, what time he presented the meal, how much she cried or shouted or how tightly she shut her mouth, this was one question he never let her ignore. She looked up and everyday she replied

"Tastes like shit,"

The shadowy aura that permeates the surrounding air of the monster before her flickered in amusement. "You say that but you've eaten the whole thing,"

They'd played this song and dance for her whole past and future and the joke never seemed to tire the man.

Miriam felt her back hit soft plush as she relaxed under the glow and metronome clicking.

Once, a day when Miriam had particular fighting spirit and busted the monster's lip open, he'd strapped her to this chair.

The blinking lights and constant ticking were making her head swim in delusion, pupils dilated and muscles soft, the monster flashed white fangs and said,

"I cannot allow you to go out and see the real stars, but isn't this daily session of ours like your own personal shooting stars?"

She looked then, as she is looking now, at the lights muddle her memories and trace an eraser down her subconscious and she thinks (or does she think? It is hard to tell right now)

She thinks the light has become beautiful and warm like a meteor shower. Even though she bites at the hand that feeds her, when it wipes the stuck hair off her sweaty forehead she cannot help but lean into the claws of the beast.

“Who am I?” It murmurs like a current that sweeps her along a river.

“Fredrick Chilton,” she supplied, knowing she’d forget this entire evening by the time damp mud touched the soles of her feet and the moon touched her raw soul.

The monster purred it’s approval of her response.

“Good job Miriam. Now tell me, who am I?”

“Fredrick Chilton,” she leaned into his touch.

The monster purred again.

Her head lolled to the side, staring at the black chasm where a man should be standing.

“Who are you?” she croaked. The monster chuffed

“You found that out not too long ago. Think hard and see if you remember”

Miriam didn’t want to remember. Not the people missing her or the way she used to have her coffee or how birds sing or camping trips or the FBI or a room with shelves of books and a raven stag statue or soft footsteps and restricted breathing or—

“Miriam, stay with me darling,” the monster nudged her shoulder.

“I remember. You’re Chilton,” Miriam let the memories slip through her mind like sand between her fingers. Everything was easier if she just believed the words spewing from the devil next to her.

“Good girl, I knew you’d be worth keeping around. Now we’ll be going off schedule today,”

Miriam blinked and her back was against cold metal, mind floating in the chicken soup she consumed early. She looked to the monster standing at her left, her arm strapped down and his blade inching out of the darkness. Cotton filled thoughts trickled down into her shoulder but stopped there, unable to process anything past that point as the monster with tall antlers and milky eyes carried away her arm.

The metal was replaced with a soft bed, strapped down in everything but her left arm. She wanted to reach over, to feel the limb's absence with her own split finger nails. That was just another thing he took from her hands. Her very life was ripped out of her hands through black claws, what was an arm when her mind was no longer her own?

“It’s ok,” she said to the still cabin air as consciousness faded like blinking stars. She repeated it over and over.

“He’ll be back. Soon he’ll be back,”

Chapter End Notes

I feel so bad for Miriam. She was quick witted, found Hannibal'a mistake and was punished for that by losing an arm and two years of her life. Can you imagine the guilt when she found out it was Hannibal and she'd shot Chilton instead out of brainwashing and fear? How even though she was released from captivity, she was still a puppet that couldn't trust her own actions or mind? Do you think sometimes she would sleep with the lights on after being in the dark so long? That she won't ever go barefoot in the mud again?
That's why I didn't really highlight the gore of her arm or the horror of it. It's just one more thing taken from her. This is her reality for two years.
I think about her a lot

The Night Calls Us

Chapter Summary

#filler #rant #sorry

Chapter Notes

I'm your man by mitski wrote this for me idk
Projecting onto Will and Hannibal? who is projecting onto Will and Hannibal, I am surely not projecting unto Will Graham and Hannibal Lecter

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will tapped his blunt nail on the arm of the couch. The fireplace was empty except for his steady gaze filling it. Winston nuzzled into his thigh wondering what Will was looking at no doubt.

Life has always been like this for Will. Would it be like this for eternity? No matter who sought him, would he still feel like a tethered hunting dog awaiting its master's return?

He looked to his cellphone. No call from Jack (*i only matter when there are monsters to slay*), or text from Beverly (*it was really only a matter of time, how much can one friend take?*), no date planned with Hannibal (*one day he'd wake up and find this had all been a joke to Hannibal. Let's see how far the socially blind could be led down a path to hell)* .

Winston sneezed in anxiety.

The sun was setting. Will opened his mouth and no assurances came. Nothing but his shaky breath exited, and even that rattled his bones.

It was warm, so warm the cicadas were screaming and the lightning bugs were mingling with tall grass, so Will didn't put his waders on. A hand stopped the obedient dog from following Will to the river.

His phone, the damned thing of cold metal, fell forgotten between the couch cushions. Tonight it felt too heavy a burden to carry with him.

Through the saw grass he waded and wondered, what had triggered this bottomless feeling? He'd been to enough therapy to know how to intellectualize his feelings. Sometimes the

small compartments Will packed himself into spilled out like tipped cans of paint, soaking into each other so completely they made room for only one feeling at a time.

Damp mud touched the bare feet of which he forgot to provide shoes for. At least he'd remembered pants this time.

The water, emotionless and welcoming, beckoned for him to sit and let her wash these worryings away. When Will felt stained that one color of emotion, dark ink of loneliness, the stream always babbled reassurances.

"Yes," she cooed, "you may be alone, but alone the way the stars are. Alone the way cicadas are or blades of grass are. You are light years from the ones just like you, but connected by tangled roots and a chorus of song."

And Will would pretend he understood these feelings of being alone among the thousands. He would pretend to believe her, just like he pretended to trust that he'd never be abandoned again.

Wading into the stream, first his ankles then knees then waist, he'd let her current soothe him. He was convinced one day he'd find rocks heavy with earth and erosion, and lay in her a final time. That was before Winston. Before Beverly bought them matching keychains on her trip with her family and invited him to Thanksgiving each year. Before Hannibal patiently returned time and again like a shadow. He wasn't sure the river bed's embrace would be as sweet leaving them in his wake.

The elk bayed and pawed its hoof to the ground. Will gazed unto it like an apparition of all his past sins. The elk's head was bloody and shot open, like something tried to kill and bury it —consume it—but the elk kept coming back.

"At the end of my life, will you be the only one that stayed?" Will spoke (thought? Shouted?) as he sunk into the creek until his shoulders were submerged, then the crown of his head. Once baptized, he resurfaced anew, desperate to stay beneath the surface and just as desperate to take in a lungful of humid air.

He listened. The cicadas still sang. The grass still swayed. The elk still shook its head and warned him of things in its foreign tongue.

The moon hung in the sky now. It didn't matter how long he'd been out here. Would it ever be long enough? That swirling, swallowing void in the pit of his stomach that could not be filled until someone was between his teeth, pinned under his claws, like some dangerous dog too afraid to let go of its meal.

The walk home brought no less clarity as the moon followed him. She was watchful that way.

After a quick shower, hot as the need perched in his chest, Will crawled unto the couch where Winston was watching him. Curling around the dog Will felt bad for the poor thing's fate. Winston hadn't a choice of master, was it unhappy? Would it rather be on the side of the road

still in that snow then wrapped in a tight embrace of someone that would rather die than allow him free?

Will dug his phone out of the couch. In three hours Beverly had sent him three texts.

What should I have for dinner tonight?

I finally text Carter you better have something delicious for me on Monday!

Is the stream calling?

He responded simply

The stream called but I'm glad you did too.

He dialed Hannibal.

"Hello darling, everything alright?"

Will stayed silent, words sitting sticky sweet in his stomach like honey.

"Hmm, that bad? Want me to come over?" Hannibal sounded to be cutting something. Will chuffed. Who cut vegetables at 2 in the morning?

"Or did you call just to hear my melodious voice?" Hannibal laughed to himself, a sound Will drank in.

There was the tug of the leash and Hannibal was at the other end of it. Like some loyal dog Will remained tied to the place people left him at. Only Hannibal asked him to move, demanded he come along and stay by his side. No matter his condition.

"Would you like me to stay on until you fall asleep?" Hannibal was taking more cookware out in the background.

Will didn't answer.

Did Hannibal deserve this? Some starving dog that clung unto him with fangs disguised as the soft kiss of a palm?

"It would make my evening more enjoyable if I could"

Will didn't answer.

He laid the phone beside his head and tucked Winston under his chin. If Hannibal would offer the bone, who was Will to turn it away? Should he not snatch this small glimmer of hope? Was he expected to not use everything in his disposal to leash the other party as well? What was the sting of fangs to the gloved hand? If Will could not have the man returning, he would just make sure the man couldn't leave in the first place. What was a hunter disarmed with no feet to carry him away?

After moments of quiet, Will spoke hoarsely,

“What are you cooking?”

Will enclosed the phone in his palms as if it were Hannibal himself. That if he squeezed hard enough the man would dissolve into Will’s skin and become one with him. Would that fill the incessant void? Would that quiet the stream and the elk?

Will might be a hunting dog forgotten on its lead, but Hannibal would be the prey he chased with inexhaustible stamina. Until it collapsed and had no choice but to be consumed by him so entirely that one could not tell where Hannibal began and Will ended.

Hannibal was speaking now, but Will was asleep, phone clutched close to his ear and heart racing from the chase.

****

Hannibal listened to the soft breathing on the other line.

What could render Motzart incomparable but the breathing of such a perfect creature?

Never had Hannibal desired to take apart something like he wished to take apart Will. Never had he wanted something to be so broken and whole.

Not only for the man’s unique mind, but for the streams through which his love flowed. It was there babbling to the surface if one simply took the time to wade into cool waters.

Though Hannibal calculated carefully, largely his emotions ruled him. What brought him to feed on others? Yes it was the innate belief that he was a hunter and they his prey, but even pigs and deer appreciated the beauty of life. This is what Hannibal cannot stand, the dismissal of the mortal.

Things were finite. That is what made them worth savoring, knowing they’d be taken eventually.

Except Will.

Separating the pair would be like severing the connection between god and their Angel. What was the Angel if it could not serve its god? What was a creation with no purpose? What was a god with no creation?

Hannibal had feared—though he’d never admit it, not even to himself— for many years that he was forced to haunt this earth with no equal. What was a deer that did not run from the pursuit of dogs? What was the point in devouring and hunting, if not to hunt beside another? What was breaking the natural order of the world if no one watched you do it?

Hannibal stood under his bedroom window where the moon’s pale glow illuminated his gaunt features. The kill tonight had been lackluster, the food ash until he could hear the pleading of his god. Whimpering for attention like a dog, Hannibal fitted a collar properly, overcome with the need to not let it escape.

What felt better to an angel than being needed by his god?

If his mind were separated into paints, what was more fun than splashing it all unto one canvas? Splattering like blood until every emotion bled into one another, the pain becoming pleasure and worship blending into a becoming of holy disgrace.

How would that loyal dog react when he out the deer he was pursuing was leading him to a pitfall? Fangs were advantageous, but they were not the only thing capable of splitting skin and incapacitating prey.

Hannibal traversed the silent home like a game trail worn into woods until he was in the burrows of his basement. As he skinned the pig in front of him he once again thought of Will, bringing the phone to lay between his shoulder and ear.

If he was an angel, he'd find a way to chain god to his side. Hannibal's heart beat from the excitement of future blasphemy.

In the distance, beneath the breathing and cutting of an altar worthy of a god, Hannibal could hear it. The stream swirling beneath Will's skin, ready for Hannibal to rest there

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry I'm the one you love— Will
No one will ever love me like you again — Hannibal

A Lamb Chosen

Chapter Summary

Curiosity kills the cat, will there be satisfaction to bring it back?

Chapter Notes

The Hobbs family dynamic will be different here. I hope it still seems authentic and natural.

I wanted the meeting ™ to be a little up to chance. Abigail was being a kid. Hannibal was being himself. I think it highlights evil lurks everywhere. all it takes is a pretty eye color and a scrunched nose to ruin your life as you know it when you run into the devil

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal grasped the apple nearest to him. A small bruise was beginning to form near the stem, enlarging as Hannibal pressed his thin nail into it. The girl across the store was insisting her father purchase the shampoo that *hadn't* been tested on animals, and the man was rubbing his eyes, obviously trying to rub the patience back in through skin contact.

He'd been watching them for a couple days now. They were close but there was an underlying tension with their relationship, like a mouse raising a cat.

Of course the cat *loved* the mouse, but that didn't stop its fangs from itching to eat it.

Will, in his sensual glory, had been indulging Hannibal as of late. Last week, with limbs intermingled and still warm, Will asked Hannibal if he were happy.

Am I enough? Is what Hannibal knew he was questioning.

Hannibal told him the truth

I've never been happier than when I'm with you .

Will nuzzled close, breathing in the scent of their communion and slept as if that question had kept him up for days. As he watched Will's chest rise and fall, felt his arms claw under Hannibal's skin in desperate attempts to keep him there, Hannibal wondered the same thing.

Am I enough?

Hannibal was not one to question himself. Confidence in himself and his ideals was forged in his blood from the moment he died and was born a second time on that snowy day. He has always known what he was put on this earth to do.

He just never entertained the idea of someone joining him on this walk of controlled chaos.

It wasn't a question of if Hannibal was good enough.

Am I too much?

Once he realizes the truth, will he stay?

Hannibal was not delusional. The sleeping man in his arms *would* figure Hannibal out eventually whether by admission or investigation.

"I have two options" Hannibal thought, musing Will's curls out of his eyes, " *I can wait until Will finds out and see what happens"*

Hannibal held the sleeping man close, tenderly biting the flesh of his shoulder. Will mumbled but did not wake. A chill of excitement twinged with apprehension ran down Hannibal's spine at that prospect. It would be interesting, watching Will despair and revenge, most likely trying to kill Hannibal in his anger.

Hannibal bit a little harder. There would be a mark later. Will roused with half lidded eyes.

" *Or I can make sure a third party connects us, something Will* ***cannot*** *abandon. My dearest Will, ever the parental comfort seeker, desperate to be different from his mother and better than his father,"*

"Ready for round two or somethin?" Will smirked, his southern accent seeping in through the haze of being awoken by the cutting of teeth.

I'll give him a family

"Always ready for another round," Hannibal kissed directly under Will's ear.

"You're an insatiable monster" Will smiled with a show of sharp canines, already sitting up out of bed.

"Only for you,"

***

There wasn't anything particular that caught Hannibal's attention. The girl, no more than 8, ran into him at a local park as he was following a particularly rude set of dentists taking their nephews out.

She politely apologized, blushing as she made unashamed eye contact with Hannibal. Remarkably, her eyes reminded him of Will's iridescent ones. They even shared the same

cunningly observant stare. She was much better at hiding how calculating she was compared to Will.

“That is alright. Youth is allowed a little grace when transpiring the world for the first time,”

She scrunched her nose and laughed, “I’ve never heard anyone talk like that,”

Hannibal cocked his head. Her head cocked in interest as well, mimicking Hannibal by instinct or mockery he wasn’t sure. Though, Hannibal assumed it to be a mixture of both considering her intelligence and twist of a teasing smile.

“Abigail,” a man snapped behind her. He pulled his ball cap low in mock embarrassment, but Hannibal recognized the action for what it was. The man wished not to be seen.

The man’s own eyes were a muddy brown. Their flickering paranoia as he grabbed the girl’s shoulder betrayed his own little beast inside. Hannibal watched them go.

A sheep in wolf’s clothing. The man was a killer, or wanted to be, Hannibal didn’t need a whole therapy session to realize that. Even worse than being obvious, he was the *pathetic* type . A killer that killed out of fear . No artistry, no intentions deeper than clinging to what he feared to lose. It was *boring*.

Unsure of the details for now, he shuffled their profiles to the back of his mind. Will and Hannibal had a date in two days. Miriam needed to be fed and medicated. The Ripper must lay a trap soon. The dentists would be taken care of first.

Curious . Hannibal realized. The girl had been curious about him. A scrunched nose and clear eyes. A voracious appetite to find out about the world. An astute ability to take in her surroundings and make appropriate calculations to get what she wanted.

A hunter. A wolf being raised by a sheep or a sheep that thought herself a wolf?

Should Hannibal take in the cub? Show the little lamb what real wolves were?

Hannibal watched the car they hastily left in. He memorized the license plate.

***

“Abby, focus,” Garrett chastised with a snap, “you see any girls you want to be friends with?”

Abigail surveyed the park, reluctantly taking her attention from the ice cream in her hand. Her father was worried the lawyer would take away joint custody if Abigail didn’t have enough friends. Though he would insist it was because she needed to get out more, expand her horizons, but she had plenty of friends at school. Really, when she was with her father she enjoyed their hunting trips. The calm forest and her father’s whispering instructions surrounding her like the arms of her mother. She’d just turned the age to hold the gun steady, to be the one to glide the knife and peel the skin away from their kills. Blood would coat her hand, warm as her own blood pumping through small veins.

They'd dismember it by the joints, clean the skin, freeze the best cuts. She'd watch her father cut into the sealed bags and the meat sizzle in the pan. She'd hold her mother's hand as they prayed over the meal, and she'd savor the kill. She'd honor it.

After the divorce, her mother had insisted these trips stop. Garrett, afraid of the court, had agreed. Abigail had not been consulted.

"Oh Abby, you dropped your ice cream," Garret bent down to scrape the melting treat from the concrete of the pavilion to the grass. His shoe bent the blades as he scraped the syrup off the side.

A boy tugged along a man scrolling his phone, the boy screaming to be swung and the man nodding. No partner appeared. *Must be divorced too.*

"What about him?" She pointed to the man now begrudgingly pushing the boy. Garrett scrunched his nose in apprehension as the boy screamed *Higher!*

"He seems a bit… high energy."

"He only has a dad," Abigail pointed out. Sometimes her father was not as observant as her. She tried not to roll her eyes when his shoulders slumped, or he dragged his hat over his eyes, or his arms folded in like he was making himself smaller. It was annoying, seeing her father be so tall, so confident, among the trees and then returning to a stone world and having him shrink. Even deer stood straight and still in the face of a barrel.

"His partner could be at home. Or that could be a cousin or nephew. Don't make assumptions," Garrett said as he pet her hair, "Assumptions are how you underestimate your prey."

Abigail nodded and rubbed her chin. That made sense.

"Besides, do you really want to be friends with a *boy?"* Garret stuck his tongue out dramatically. Abigail giggled.

" *Dad,* girls can be friends with boys. It just takes much more patience. I have boy acquaintances at school," Abigail shook her head ruefully. They were much dumber than her girl friends, though her mother said she had to stop telling them that to their faces. Garret snorted.

" *Acquaintances?* Where did that word come from?"

"There is this thing called books I would *love* for you to try out," she patted his arm with mock sympathy. As he laughed and poked her side, her eyes were drawn to someone across the park.

He stood straight as an arrow, taunt like a bowstring. His clothes were plain, deep red jogging pants and black tennis shoes adorned with a boring black shirt. For some reason, Abigail felt he looked silly in it.

Last year, when Abigail was anticipating the responsibility of firing the gun that coming fall, her father made her watch a documentary about the wildlife in the surrounding area.

These are the signs of predators. He nodded like a wise wizard passing on knowledge to a pupil (and maybe Abigail thought that because she'd just finished *The Lord of the Rings*)

She excitedly memorized footprints and scat and the calls of wild things. Every bit of information was consumed, but the documentary of the wildcats with poised strength and ambushing methods were what played in her mind for nights leading up to the woods. Now whenever she was in the woods the comfort remained, but the *absences* were noticed. When the birds stopped, when the deer's head swiveled without a sound, when the very cicadas stopped screaming, Abigail noticed. It meant a predator was in their midst.

The park noises seemed to dampen, the blades of grass dying in his shadow without his shoes even bending the blades. Abigail couldn't help but want to get closer like seeing a lion in the zoo. The glass could stop anything bad from happening, from the canines cutting into her jugular. Her father wouldn't let anything happen to her.

"I want to be friends with the girl on the slide," Abigail began walking in the path of the man who had his back to her. He was staring at the man and boy at the swings while pretending to stretch for a run. She felt a rush as if hunting. Like a snake creeping up on a frog watching a fly.

As she approached, not slowing, the man turned slightly in her direction as if noticing her approach. Not wanting to be caught lurking, she ran into his side full force, surprised how solid the muscles coiled underneath the silly attire were.

"I'm sorry sir," she wanted to look into his eyes, to see if her hunter's instinct was strong like her father's. So even when her father went red faced accentuating the dark circles under his eyes, even when he tugged her along, she stared at the man in red.

His words were accented and made her ears feel funny hearing them. She parroted him like a bird when his eyes flickered with a disconnected interest.

"Abigail," her father said with his firm *im-not-kidding-anymore* grip on her shoulder. There was no apology or small talk, just an urgency to leave. Abigail pouted slightly. They'd just gotten to the park.

After they buckled in and the view out of her window was a blur, Abigail broke the silence.

"Why were you so scared of that man?"

Garrett scoffed and looked at her through the rearview mirror.

"I was not *scared* of him Abby,"

"Then why did we leave?"

Garrett worked his bottom lip between his teeth before shaking his head.

“What is something your mother and I always tell you?”

“If I don’t brush my teeth I’ll look like Great Uncle Clarence?”

“The *other* thing,”

“Always make sure the safety is on and the oven is off?”

“The one about bears, honey,”

“Don’t poke sleeping bears in their caves?”

Garrett nodded, “I wasn’t scared of him. Just cautious. Why did you run into him like that?”

“I was just excited to get to the slides is all,” Abigail said with fingers crossed behind her back. This was the only useful thing a boy had taught her. If she crossed her fingers it wasn’t lying. Garrett pondered this.

“Just remember, when you poke a wild animal, what does it do?”

“Bite you?”

“Yes, it bites you and some predators never let go.”

***

The phone rang.

Jack rubbed his eyes and sighed. It was too late and simultaneously too early for a phone to be ringing. Quickly, *Bella needed her beauty sleep,* he grabbed it off the hook. As soon as he sucked in a breath to scream at whatever telemarketer thought this was a good idea, a voice began that clogged his breath.

“ *Jack? It’s Miriam* .”

Jack stood immediately and Bella stirred with bleary eyes. His mouth opened and closed. He pinched himself.

“ *I don’t know where I am.”*

The room spun. His heart tried to claw away from his rib cage. It was trying to reach wherever Miriam was.

“ *I can’t see anything”*

An unsteady breath from both of them.

“I was so wrong”

Her voice turned shrill, bellowing and raggad in intensity like her throat was full of blades. Like she hasn’t spoken to anyone in two years.

“ ***I was so wrong Jack”***

The crescendo broke like a wave crashing into shore

“ *Please Jack”*

Miriam Lass, Jack’s biggest regret, begged to be saved. He could practically feel her panting breath against his ear. Her desperate plea mixing in with Bella’s *what’s wrong? What’s wrong?* ***What’s wrong?***

“ *I don’t want to die like this”*

The call flatlined

Chapter End Notes

The story is really going to pick up soon. A lot of things are coming to a head….
Insane how Hannibal doesn’t think he has abandonment issues and then baby traps a man

The Hand That Feeds

Chapter Summary

Jack is entering dangerous waters

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the sabbatical. I entered some writing contests and it always makes me question my ability to write original pieces. I got a little depressed and figured no one would care about this little fic haha. I actually got back on the horse cause other Hannibal fanfics got me out of depression fog and I realized I let my babes hanging!! Thanks for any support and sticking with this fic, whether you're just now reading it, keeping tabs, or don't even like it much. You mean the world to me

Shout out to AstralRavyn who, in their bookmark, mentioned Dvorak. I listened to hardly any of it and thought "yeah, Hannibal would wanna fuck to this" so thank them for this (what I thought) hilarious /silly/ non explicit intimacy scene

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Check again."

"I'm telling you Jack. I checked again and again. Hell I checked my again and agains. There is no trace for that call last night." Beverly rolled away from the computer with a frown, "I've checked every carrier, but no dice."

"Well then explain what the hell happened last night. I *know* I got a call."

Beverly shrugged, "they could have made it in your neighborhood or even the little box outside your house. Either way, they didn't leave a signal for me to track. I'm sorry."

"It. Was. Miriam." Jack grit his teeth. Zeller leaned against the wall, taking one last look at the computer brandishing red error letters.

"Are you sure Jack? I mean you haven't heard her voice in two years." Zeller pressed into the wall as Jack turned quick as a rattlesnake strike.

"You still want to question me? Maybe you should leave before I decide it isn't safe for you to be here."

The room fell into uncomfortable silence, electric with Jack's fury. It was always like this with Jack, if he didn't have an answer that meant *everyone* had a problem.

"Ok, so the Ripper recorded her two years ago as he was killing her," Jack breathed life back into the room, "and then played that recording for me?"

Will sat on the edge of the computer desk, sort of hiding behind Beverly before he said something Jack wouldn't like.

"Are you sure it was a recording? You've said yourself… there was never a body. Has our Ripper *ever* taken someone and not displayed them?"

Jack turned the fiery gaze to Will, "and what? Kept her as a pet these last two years? No if Miriam was alive I'd… I'd know. I'd feel it." He tapped his chest twice for emphasis.

"Could have been a dream. It can be hard to tell the difference when you're in the middle of it." Zeller snatched the attention back to him. Will let out a breath.

"I know when I'm awake." Jack hissed.

"I know how it feels Jack, to not know if you're awake." Will whispered despite himself. Everyone jumped like alley cats when Jack slammed a closed fist on the desk.

" *I know when I'm awake!"*

The team exchanged glances. Jack felt oceans in between them, a desperate distance he'd never felt from his star team before. Why did they have to fight him on every statement?

Why did they have to give him even a glimmer of hope he'd see Miriam alive?

"Even if I didn't, Bella was there with me. She can attest that I took a phone call." Jack rubbed his eyes, the weight of the world resting on his aching shoulders.

"I'm tired." Jack's broken tone made the agent's hair stand up straighter than the fist he neatly wielded. "I want the Ripper to *justice.* I want Mirim to *rest.* I want my wife *comforted.* I have an idea to pull the Ripper out of their own ass."

They waited, air tense with anticipation.

"Dr. Chilton, the head of the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane called this morning with a crime scene. He's been claiming for days he's had the Ripper in his hands all these years. Now he thinks he has proof."

Will scoffed, "And what does he make of the recent tableus? Let me guess, he let the Ripper have time out of their cell to make more? Please Jack."

"Chilton claims a copy cat is afoot." Jack raises a hand as Will opens his astonished mouth, "I didn't say I believe Chilton, but this gives a unique opportunity."

“Opportunity to…?” Will crossed his arms, hoping the slithering ball of anxiety could be squashed from his chest if he pressed hard enough.

“To reach out. To anger them. An opportunity for the Ripper to *make a mistake.* ” Jack slapped a balled fist into his own open palm, awaiting the team’s reaction. Everything clicked and the first person they looked to was Will.

“You’re not *seriously* thinking of getting into bed with Freddie, are you Jack? The red maned little *jackal!* ”

Jack straightened his posture, a sure sign his mind was made up, and answered, “I’ll have to see the crime scene Dr. Abel Gideon left first, to see if it’s a believable story.”

Will narrowed his eyes but said nothing, blunt nails taping against his arm to keep his tongue in check. Beverly patted his back with a sigh.

***

“Jack can’t even see the Ripper is taunting him, making a goddamn fool out of that jackass.” Will let out a breath, readjusting the curls slicked to his forehead and Hannibal’s leg on his shoulder in one go.

“Jack is really giving—mm.” Hannibal silenced for a moment, eyes mooning into happy crescents. Will kept the placement. He was hitting a good spot.

“I mean *Chilton,* Hannibal. When has that micro dick ever done something original? And Freddie?” Will gripped the side of Hannibal a little harder. “That good for nothing bitch… as if they could ever amount to half of the wit of the Ripper.”

“Objectively, this could make the Ripper’s ego flare a bit, which is usually a prelude to a pride fueled downfall. Don’t you agree?”

“No.” Will gritted his teeth, pressing a soft touch under Hannibal’s navel, ruffling the hair there, “the Ripper isn’t like that. If they haven’t made a mistake now, then I don’t think they’ll ever slip up. They’ll see through this plan just like they see through every plan.”

Hannibal’s grip twisted the sheets, obviously wanting to rake them down Will’s skin, but allowed him to concentrate.

“What would make them slip up, Will?” his breath hitched. He was close. Will lowered his head, ghosting his teeth where Hannibal’s shoulder and neck met. Anyone else might assume Will a coquettish lover, a puppy with new fangs, but Hannibal knew his canines were already sharp. Will took his time looking for the right pulse point.

“Love, I suppose.” Will pressed a kiss to Hannibal’s temple, licking the accumulated sweat there. “I’m sorry to talk about work at a time like this.” He made a point to separate now that they were both satisfied.

Hannibal locked his ankles, keeping Will in place with his own sharp grin, “I never mind.” He cupped Will’s face, bringing him for a small brush of lips. “I cherish anything you give

me."

Hannibal merely worried if Will kept praising the Ripper during their time together, Will might think Hannibal a premature shooter. He couldn't help it, looking at Will's shining eyes and unadorned praise, Hannibal might as well have been bare on an operating table.

Or worse. His smart lover would connect the dots between Hannibal's praise kink and the topics always circling to the Ripper a bit earlier than intended. He was a bit amazed. It seemed subconsciously Will always knew just how to please Hannibal.

"Can we turn Dvorak off now? I think I've listened to Serenade for Strings enough times to play it myself."

"What can I say? The man can write a sex symphony."

Will barked a laugh, "I don't think anyone fucks to classical like you do *Dr. Lecter* ." He returned to his favorite spot, resting chapped lips against the shell of Hannibal's ear. "Can he use a baton as well as I can?"

"Dr. Graham, did you just make a classical themed innuendo at me? You really have a way with words," Hannibal nipped at the man's ear, nails fluttering over Will's neck, "and a way with batons I suppose."

As Will gazed upon Hannibal beneath him, he could see it, that look in his eyes. Hannibal had him in his gilded cage with shiny locks and a golden leash.

And he'd be damned if Will would ever be allowed out of it again.

***

Jack stomped down Quantico's halls. Dark circles permeated his mood. The meeting with Chilton was tomorrow and Jack was looking forward to it as much as a cow looked forward to slaughter.

His phone rang, instant relief sagged his shoulders, or maybe it was additional weight holding them down.

"Ciao my Bella," he said gently, like even a tone could break her body down further, "how was chemo?"

" *Jack? It's Miriam* ."

Jack stood in the hallway, listening to Miriam's frantic breath. Shutting his eyes, he could see it. Her dyed blonde hair frizzy, eyes wild with panic and fear, nails caked in the blood because she would have fought. *God* she must have fought in those last moments.

" *I don't know where I am. I can't see anything"*

A measured breath from both of them.

“I was so wrong. I was so wrong Jack!”

“No,” he leaned his forehead against the concrete walls of the building, “I was so wrong.”

“ *Please Jack.”*

Hesitation, as if in her last moments she didn’t want to burden her mentor with the sentence.

“ *I don’t want to die like this!”*

***

Gideon lay on the ground and forced himself not to laugh. Drool slipped down his cheek, sticking his slacked face to the cool concrete floors. He had to be patient.

“Dr. Gideon this is your last chance. Stand up before we have to use force.”

He felt the coole metal wedged under the skin of his palm.

Chilton wanted a show?

Abel would show him exactly who the Ripper was.

They wanted a show?

He was happy to perform.

I’ll show them

I’ll show them

I’ll show them

I’LL FUCKING SHOW THEM

The door to his enclosure slid open.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry it was a short chapter. I just wanted to give y’all a little something before the doom and gloom of the oncoming storm!

Turning a Blind Eye?

Chapter Summary

Doubts are forming in Will's psyche while Gideon's is cracking at the seams.

Chapter Notes

Thank you guys for the nice comments on my previous chapter. It really motivates me!

Also if anyone wants to read some original work, I am posting on Kindle Vella chapters. It's about a small town lesbian figuring out what's going on her town. Horror, trans lesbians, and werewolves oh my! (It only has like 2 chapters right now tho…)

It's Moon Grief by Lynn Dyke :P

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will surveyed the gore, and that's all it could be called. Mindless, thoughtless, *wasteful* gore.

Gloved hands hovered over the entry points. Her name tag read *Elizabeth* but the badge still dangling over her neck affectionately read *Liz.* If he squinted he could see her with a warm smile patting some coworkers back and asking about the arrival of their new baby.

"I'm telling you Jack. This isn't the Ripper. It's just… *ugly.* " Will closed her eyelids, he didn't know why since there were no longer eyes there to cover, but it just felt like the right thing.

Jack tapped the doorway, "this replication is perfect. How do you explain that?" He skated over, his own hand hovering over her pierced abdomen, "some of these details were never brought to the public."

"Elizabeth wasn't rude or stealing or *anything.* Hell, even the patients loved her. What reason does he have to kill her? The Ripper kills for a reason, even if that reason seems unimportant to us."

"He wants to prove he's who he says he is."

"Jack, you and I both know the Ripper doesn't need to prove himself to anyone. Sure, Ripper loves the limelight, but Gideon… I'm just sure Jack."

Jack sneered, "well I can't just tell Prunel we don't have the Ripper because 'you're sure'."

“Then who called you yesterday Jack? Who put that hair and fingerprints on your home phone? You asked me for my expert opinion and I'm providing it. I can’t help it if it’s not what you want to goddamn hear!” Will spit, unable to take his eyes off Elizabeth’s suspended head, her pale face still contorted in fear. He’d seen much carnage in the years of his service with the FBI, but this one was burning into his eyelids.

His blood boiled, someone was trying to take the credit of the Ripper with this shoddy work? Will gritted his teeth. A woman was dead because Chilton’s tongue couldn’t stay in his mouth. Because Gideon couldn’t keep his mind together. Because they knew Jack was ravenous for the Ripper, and therefore easy to use for acclaim. It was exhausting.

“Is everything alright in here? I heard raised voices.” Chilton entered.

“You sure do have a big smile for someone who just let a patient murder their staff member.” Will bit, scowling and circling like a beaten dog. A headache, something he hasn’t dealt with much since therapy with Hannibal, was beginning to form like dark clouds in a hurricane.

“Girls, girls, we get it you both are smart and pretty.” Alana leaned against the wall with her arms crossed behind Chilton. Obviously Chilton and his ego needed supervision. Will unbristled slightly at the sight of her.

“Alana you can’t tell me—“ he squinted, “what the fuck is that on your finger?”

“An… engagement ring.” Alana blushed slightly, taken aback that the conversation turned to this.

“Engaged? *To who?* ” Will stared at the rock dwarfing her thin finger. When the hell had she even been dating someone?

“I had a little party at the office with my fiancée. You must have missed it?” Alana said, flexing her finger to feel the calming weight of the ring. Will could only blink. Beverly had told him about an engagement party, but Will had elected to grade papers in his quiet, dark classroom. *Ah. Alana had brought me a slice of cake that day too.*

“Now gentleman, since you’ve surveyed the scene I’m sure you can understand why I know the Ripper is in these four walls.” Chilton interjected as he led Jack, and Will to his office. Alana parted down into the depths of the concrete building to question Gideon herself.

“Yes, it’s quite startling to know there is a copy cat among us as well.” Jack simply said as he took a sip of the lukewarm coffee provided. Will, aggrieved that he couldn’t discount either buffoon, simply bounced his leg and let Jack do the ass kissing.

“Dr. Graham, it is quite an honor to have you survey one of my patients and their work. You're quite the talk in our academic circles for that… thing you do. I’d love to hear your thoughts on having the Ripper in my care all these years. I mean I know someone has been impersonating him recently with … *blah blah blah butt kissing blah blah blah I have a tiny dick and a smaller brain blah blah…* wouldn’t you agree?”

Will fissured into an imitation of a smile, “yes I’d have to agree.”

“Dr. Chilton, we appreciate you cooperating fully with us on the coverage of the investigation.” Jack placated, recognizing Will’s I’m-gonna-rip-his-face-off expression.

“Oh, if anything you’re giving my audience a little appetizer to the main course. I'm already in the process of writing a book on our Ripper and his psychology.”

Will mustered all his masking abilities to not roll his eyes. Alana returned to them then, finished with her questioning, she wore a small frown. There and gone before she even crossed the threshold.

“He’s ready for you Will.” She blocked his questioning stare with a professional smile.

Concrete walls swallowed him down into the belly of the beast, clipped turns made by the orderly leading him until they came to the proper checkpoint. Matthew bowed slightly, opening the door from the inside with a keycard, keeping his smile close lipped. Will felt his own lips press into a hard line.

“This isn’t the time—“

“Wow, you’re Will Graham right?” Matthew cocked his head, hawklike in every way, waiting for Will to catch up. The agent narrowed his eyes.

“I am. Will you lead me to Abel Gideon please?”

“Yes sir of course. It’s such an honor—“ the other orderly boredly turned and walked away, phone in hand, “how was my acting? Doesn’t it seem like we never met? I mean you kinda almost blew it.” Matthew beamed now that the pair were walking alone.

“The hell you acting like you don’t know me for?” Will didn’t feed into the enthusiasm. Matthew’s expression slid off, revealing a pout of pursed lips and childish hurt.

“I told you like a month ago I was going undercover here for a time. I’m observing Gideon. Haven’t you noticed your TA has been missing?”

In truth, with Hannibal’s targeted cooking and affection, Will had mentally and physically healed from his earlier breakdowns much faster than normal. They were even fewer and farther between, usually about textures and food instead of dead bodies and insomnia. He really hadn’t noticed the lack of assistance in class. Matthew huffed good naturedly, as if this was expected.

“Dr. Graham, you don’t notice anything you don’t want to, huh?” Matthew slid on a blank expression as they stopped in front of Gideon’s cell. He nodded and excused himself from the pair as Will was left reeling from the conversation.

That was two strikes he’d overlooked. Important things to people he distantly cared about.

What else was Will missing?

“Dr. Graham, what do I owe the pleasure? First my dear Dr. Bloom and now an esteemed one such as yourself. I would have killed someone sooner if it got me such interesting visitors.”

Gideon pressed his face to the cool bars of the isolated cell. A sardonic grin spread like blood across the floor. Will didn't rise to the jab. He just stared where Matthew had been.

Will's brain was clicking and smoking, desperately trying to make a connection his subconscious already had, something his brain thought he couldn't handle right now. But he needed to *see.*

"Not interesting enough for your attention?" Gideon lanced again. Will took it in stride, lying to appeal to the man's freshly inflated ego.

"I'm just deep in thought Dr. Gideon, why haven't you taken credit for the Ripper kills in the last two years? Why now?"

"Well I didn't realize I'd be getting such a big fan. I've heard their copy work is *incredible.* " Gideon sighed dramatically, "I was enjoying watching you agents chase your puppy tails in circles." his face grew serious, "But I won't allow someone to take credit for my work any longer."

Will turned, as if in thought, trying to hold in a burst of laughter. Copycat? Please.

"So why start again now? What did you want to accomplish by killing Elizabeth?"

It was Gideon's turn to let out a chuckle. Will remained neutral, though his blood was hot in his veins. Whether it was the disrespect thrown at Elizabeth or the Ripper he didn't know.

"What I wanted to accomplish? Dr. Graham, what I *did* accomplish was her death. Blood on my hands. Her last breath in my lungs. Death on my head."

"Mr. Brown, I'm finished if you'll escort me out now." Will said. The questioning was a formality to trick Chilton further anyways. Will wasn't actually interested in this wannabe. The Ripper kill just to kill? Preposterous. According to the staff, Elizabeth was well loved. She was polite, timely, compassionate. The Ripper didn't snatch away life that had *worth.*

As he heard Matthew begin unlocking multiple doors, Will couldn't help turning back to Gideon.

Gideon's smile fell, like a child dropping their ice cream, at Will's grin. It was so wide it looked uncanny on one that usually remained so serious. Will laughed in his face.

Will laughed

and laughed

And laughed

***

"So not to snap bubblegum and pop wise but what do I get out of tricking the general public and that cock sucker in there?"

Jack scowled, “you get a good, *exclusive,* story and I don’t charge you for obstruction of justice on our crime scenes. Which you seem to do a lot.”

Freddie held up her hands in mock surrender, “Listen Crawford, I just don’t know how my readers will take it if they find out I lied to them to help *cops* . Kinda against my morales.”

“They’re used to lies and lack of morals by now, Lounds.” Will sneered. Freddie raised a brow.

“And why do you seem so rosy cheeked and bubbly today? Don’t tell me the Ripper helped you with your serial killer hard on in there.”

“Dr. Gideon just told me a good joke is all. He’s a pretty funny guy. I’m actually happy you’ll be speaking with him, he seems fond of women as targets.”

“Oh ho, someone’s angry they didn’t get to meet their real life homicidal pen pal today.” Freddie leaned closer to stage whisper. “Tell me Graham, do you have a little shrine at home for him? One of those boards with the red yarn and the hearts drawn over the suspect pictures?”

“Some of us actually have fulfilling lives. We’re not all cliche little rats picking off the life of others for forms of entertainment like they’re a half decomposed corpse.”

“You too have given me the worst headache. Be serious with me, did someone hire you two to bicker this badly and give me this headache?” Jack sighed.

While Jack pinched his nose, Freddie shrugged and brushed past them both, her shoulder cuffing Will’s like a taunt as she went.

“You little…” Will tried to take some deeper breaths. It was hard not to see red when the bitch’s hair would blend well with her spilled blood. He fisted and unfisted his hands, letting the anger ebb out through his skin as Will watched Freddie happily hop up the stairs to get her scoop.

****

Hannibal placed the green plate adorned with a slice of meat pie on the small table between two rocking chairs. Winston ran back and forth from the porch to the clearing, chasing the downward spiral of any object Will would throw his way. By now the dog was trained not to be interested in anything on human plates. The end of the night always ruled in his favor, scraps coming into his bowl without begging.

August blanketed the evening in the beginning of a slow approaching fall chill. The dreaded rooster alarm (that Hannibal didn’t have the heart to convince Will he didn’t need. The Ripper is your boyfriend darling…) called as Will returned to his rightful place. Beside Hannibal.

Will stretched, back popping, muscles taunt and… tempting before plopping in “his” chair. Hannibal was already seated in his own designated chair. It felt good to have carved a place

in routine and life. There was now a table on the porch, dessert spoons and (color coded) plates, a sketchbook laid here and there at Will's abode. Hannibal's own house had more additions, a dog bed and toys (and a stronger vacuum), hooks and feathers to make lures, and a flannel to keep.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" Will mumbled, mouth half full, letting some of the pieces of meat fall to Winston.

"How was work today?" Hannibal gracefully dodged.

Will swallowed. Hesitated. Shrugged.

"Alana is engaged. Matthew is undercover." Will said cryptically, placing his clean plate on their side table. His first knuckle marched to its own rhythm against the wood of the chair. Hannibal played along.

"Yes, she's been engaged since June. You brought home some of her cake, remember?"

"No I… I don't. I mean I remember the cake but I didn't even pay attention to what it was for. What was going on in her life."

"You have to see serial killer's psyche everyday. You have a partner and dog. You're bound to retreat into your mind and go on autopilot once in awhile, dear."

"I didn't notice. I didn't notice because I didn't want to." Will mumbled, picking at the skin of his lips. Winston barked and Will absentmindedly moved his skin peeling energy to pet Winston instead. He was so easy to train. Winston was too of course.

"Did Alana say something today?"

"That's the thing, she didn't seem upset at all, as if… as if she expected me not to care or remember. Not to notice."

"I think you're overthinking this. You're one of the most observant, intelligent people I know. That doesn't mean you see everything all the time."

Will rubbed Winston's ear in thought. After a beat, he moved the hand to Hannibal, palm up for him to take hold of.

"I suppose you're right. There are things I overlook. Things I don't want to look at."

"Usually am." Hannibal chuckled at the scoff Will retorted with. Now to get to what Hannibal really wanted to know.

"So how was it? Was the Ripper everything you thought he'd be?" Hannibal joked, ready for Will to tear into that imposter with snark.

A cloud seemed to pass over him. Lips obviously warred with his mind for only a millisecond, but it was a time too long for Hannibal not to notice.

“I’ve got to admit, the Ripper was pretty disappointing. I don’t know how someone like Gideon could kill long enough to get away with it. Maybe the FBI isn’t as good as it thinks.” Will laugh dryly, eyes cast to the woods surrounding his property.

Electricity ran through Hannibal, frazzling his demeanor, nearly unzipping his suit. *How could Will actually think the Ripper was Gideon? Why couldn’t Will see? See that Chilton was grasping for notoriety! It must be a joke. This is too unlike him…*

“Why have they made of the recent art then?” Hannibal smoothed his suit with his free hand. He couldn’t risk grabbing Will’s hand too tightly. Will slowly turned, taking in every cell of Hannibal’s face. After an agonizing silence Will continued.

“A copycat. Someone using the Ripper’s name to woo the object of their obsession with viscera and get away with it.”

Hannibal’s eye couldn’t help twitch slightly. It was all cataloged and compartmentalized in the blue stare currently drowning him.

Those pigs dare take credit for my love letters?

They don’t deserve to breathe the same air as us.

Why can’t Will see that?

See me, Will

See me

“I guess I can get rid of that god awful sensor alarm now?” Will forced a smile, untangling his hand from Hannibal’s to pet Winston’s head in his knee, “since the Ripper’s been caught.”

Hannibal outstretched his hand to let it rest on and massage the back of Will’s neck. Will, the perfect rabbit comfortable in its snare, leaned into it.

“I would keep it. You never know what else can be lurking in the dark right under your nose.”

****

Miriam’s voice rang in the very marrow of Jack’s bones, by this third call it was infused in his DNA, drilled into every nightmare.

He stood in front of the observatory. The imposing building casting him in shadow, ominous in its looming view.

The voice over the phone was the only thing keeping him tethered to his body as he twisted the doorknob.

He expected a body.

There was just an arm.

And a note.

Thought you could use a hand in the investigation.

—The Chesapeake Ripper

Chapter End Notes

I don’t know why, but Elizabeth Shell’s death was the only one in Hannibal (other than Beverly) that made me feel sad. Idk maybe it’s cause most of them had reasons to die other than those two. I just didn’t have the heart to narrate her death and besides I don’t think it was necessary anyways. I mean we all watched the show so.

Insane that Will makes fun of Gideon for being manipulated as if Will hasn’t let a serial killer set his autistic comfort routine

Thanks for reading!!

Killing the Fawn to Spare a Lamb

Chapter Summary

A new murder is at large
Everything is fine

Chapter Notes

Sorry for slow posting. I keep losing power. Florida is being hit so hard with hurricanes this year. We about to break off and become an island or something I fear 😭🙏

ALSO PLEASE TW WARNING. !!!! There is violence and gore involving a child (both alive [abby] and dead [the victim])on page in this chapter. It is not a huge part but it's there. Please take care of your mental health and skip that part if need be!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Damn so you lied to him?" Beverly stabbed her chicken chow mein

"Lie… that's not the word I'd use. I mean Freddie, Jack… they're the ones lying. It's not like Hannibal is a part of the FBI payroll. Technically I tell him too much anyways, what's the harm if he thinks Gideon is the Ripper for awhile?" Will swirled his own noodles contemplating the logic. He didn't really know why he kept Jack's plan a secret either, especially from someone as intelligent and understanding as Hannibal.

Beverly's tv droned in the background, flashing the muted anguish of some trashy reality show, while the pair chowed down on the delivery food.

"Hannibal is an amazing chef but sometimes you need some good old fashioned greasy pizza that is not made with homemade crust and fresh mozzarella. I miss freezer-burned fish once a week…" Will chewed through wet cardboard of a pizza. Comforting.

"I'm calling your bluff. Ain't no way the Will Graham that I knew seduced a man that makes his own pizza." Carter reached her hand over Beverly's shoulder and stole a piece of chicken from the take out box. Beverly poked her chest with her chopsticks.

"I've tried to tell you! He is that good."

"You speaking about Hannibal's cooking is that good or Will's skills of seducing men?" Carter cocked an eyebrow, making Beverly snort into her shoulder. Will pursed his lips.

“I’ll have you know *Hannibal* came on to *me.* ”

Carter couldn’t help but press into Beverly’s temple to stifle a laugh, “oh I’m sure he has come all over you— *yeouch* Graham!”

“Don’t make me throw another coaster at you.” Will grumbled as he tried to hide his flushed cheeks.

“Your aim must be as good with a coaster as with a cupid's arrow.” Beverly clutched her heart dramatically and fell into Carter’s lap. Carter smirked, feeding her another piece of chicken.

“Lesbians.” Will rolled his eyes.

“Excuse me, I am bisexual. I will tolerate no bi erasure in my own apartment.” Will opened his mouth to bicker but Beverly continued, “ *especially* from a horrendously bisexual man.”

“I am, in fact, a lesbian so thank you.” Carter raised her hand. Beverly stretched her heels into Will’s thigh, officially taking up the entire couch.

They watched their reality show together, Carter running her fingers through Beverly’s hair and Will (lovingly) tolerating her feet in his lap. The dusk turned to night with startling normality.

Will leaned his head down to rest on the couch, eyes heavy but no longer bleeding of nightmares and shadows. He couldn’t help but fall asleep tucked between cushion and weighted comfort. In a blink Carter was shaking him awake.

“You wanna spend the night?” she said, rubbing her eyes. Will couldn’t place where Beverly was, his lead filled glances darting to and fro, before Carter patted him again.

“I carried her to bed. You wanna spend the night? I know you don’t like staying places other than home but it’s like 3am.”

Will narrowed his eyes, brain foggy, “just give me a minute to wake up.”

Carter shook her head but didn’t fight it. She sat down next to him, ruffling his hair to annoy him.

“You gonna call that creep to come getcha?” Carter pinched his cheek, knowing the fastest way to wake Will up was to make him fire spitting mad. Will just batted her hand away and crossed his arms.

“Maybe.” He grumbled. Carter felt her eyebrows hit her hairline. She placed a hand against Will’s forehead.

“The Will Graham I know would never accept help from someone.” She laughed, smile falling when she saw the scars across his forehead. “Even if he was on the verge of dying.”

“Things change I suppose.” Will rubbed his arms to get the blood moving.

“How’d someone like you let those defenses down? Don’t suppose y’all met on one of those new dating apps?” She teased, knowing Will nearly popped a blood vessel when Beverly suggested using one a few years ago. Will stood to stretch (and not to show how uncomfortable he was confessing how they met).

“He… helped me with cases. These days we aren’t much colleagues anymore, which is just fine with me.”

“Profiling seems up that dude’s alley.”

“Actually he doesn’t work for the FBI. He’s a psychiatrist they consult at times.” Will smiled, trying not to brag.

“Surprised you didn’t meet him on the range.” Carter remarked. Will frowned, clearing the table of bottles to do something with his hands.

“Why do you say that?”

Carter picked up a cold slice of pizza, chewed it slowly, then provided a response.

“I just thought you maybe met at an outdoor or gun club or… something.”

Will scoffed, throwing the bottles in the trash and tieing the bag to take out when he left. “Hannibal, in an outdoors club?”

“Alright he seems a bit persnickety but I can tell. He’s got a gaze like an experienced hunter.” Carter stood, stretched her built body, even flexed to make Will laugh.”I’m six foot, and I’ve never felt small till I met that man.”

****

Abigail watched her father slice into Elise. She’d been a good one. Shared her library books with people in class, called her “Abby, Abby, Abby!”, helped a kid tie their shoes.

It was too bad the deer didn’t choose who was hunted and who was spared. Abigail would have liked to spare this one. Sometimes she’d imagine it, a stumbling fawn underneath her barrel. She’d lower it, pet and coax the baby and watch it hop away after its mother. No trigger was ever pulled by her fingers, no blood splattering like the tie dye shirts she’d made last year, no new friend lay on her father’s table.

“Are you paying attention, Abby?” Her father put the knife down. She tuned him out once he’d gone on his rant about using every part, sparing the lamb by killing the deer (whatever that meant), how it wasn’t murder, it was surviving.

“I’m paying attention.” She was staring at Elise’s sternum, so ghastly white it might as well be glowing.

“Good. As I was saying, we need to always nurture our prey, make sure it’s painless and we use every part of them. Why is that?”

“Because if we don’t it’s just plain murder” Abigail parroted, allowing herself to be swallowed by the abyss of Elise’s empty cavity.

“And why do we keep our game a secret?”

“Because it’s Abby and Daddy’s special game. The one only we can play?”

“Correct as always, my perfect Angel.” Hobbs peppered her cheek on kisses, knowing she’d squirm away from him. He just couldn’t help it, everytime he blinked she was a head taller, a year older, closer to leaving him behind.

“I get to hold the gun next year right?” Abigail said, watching as her father dropped organs into plastic bags to be frozen.

“Yes that’s—“ her father stopped, staring at the liver in his hands. There was a mass. It looked like a quarter. Or the little spots of mold that grew in the shower sometimes.

“Dad?” Abigail asked, stroking Elise’s long hair cascaded across the sturdy wood table.

“No.” is all Hobbs could muster, holding the cancerous liver like the weight of the earth was pressing into his palm. Abigail cocked her head.

“ *No!* ” He screamed.

They couldn’t eat this.

It was cancerous.

This poor innocent girl that looked like his daughter, the freckles of her face still bright as white spots on a fawn, dead and cut open for nothing.

They’d murdered this girl.

****

Will jiggled the key in the lock. Once, twice, pop. For such a damn expensive house you’d think the key would be easier to slide in. He trudged in, grin spiraling to his ears when a familiar clicking followed him from the entryway.

“Good morning, Winston. Did I wake you?” Will whispered, taking a knee to pet the pup. Winston happily circled him a few times, sniffing here and there before going back to his bed in the foyer. After watching the dog settle, Will slipped into the kitchen for a beer before bed. The last thing he expected was Hannibal standing there, butchering meat at nearly half past four in the morning.

“ *Fuck* me!” Will yelled, clutching his chest as his heart tried to crawl out of his throat, “what the hell are you doing up right now?”

Hannibal held the butcher knife mid swing, his own eyebrows raised in a feigned surprise. “I’m apologize, I wasn’t expecting you home tonight. I assumed you were spending the night

with Miss Kantz."

"So you decided to stay up and, what, catch on some knife work?" Will saddled up next to him, hugging Hannibal from behind to place his tired head against the man's broad back, careful to avoid the bloodied apron. "That sounds like something a serial killer does."

"I wouldn't be opposed to being arrested if I got to pick the officer putting me in handcuffs." Hannibal said, a smirk evident in his tone as he resumed the swing, cracking through muscle with ease.

"Don't tempt me." Will pressed his fingers into Hannibal's hips. Hannibal turned his head slightly, eyebrow arched. Incubus.

"I'm too tired." Will groaned, relieving his death grip of possession, "come to bed with me soon?"

Hannibal hummed without commitment, fingers digging into the ribs to rip apart the few strands of tendons still connecting. Winston came trotting into the kitchen at the sound, hopeful for scraps falling from the marble counter. Buzzing dragged Will from pressing his face into Hannibal's warmth.

"You've got to be fucking me." Will grumbled as he read the caller ID. *Jack fucking Crawford.*

"Don't answer it. You haven't slept yet." Hannibal said, portioning the meat into glass containers filled with marinade. At least what Will assumed to be a marinade.

"I can't ignore him, Hannibal. You know that."

"Of course you can. I've told you a myriad of times I think it is in your best interest to part ways with the FBI. My home is always—"

"I'm not becoming your housewife Dr. Lecter." Will teased a bit firmly. He looked back down at the missed call. If he knew Jack then he'd be getting another one very soon.

"I'm not suggesting you become a housewife." Hannibal calmly placed the meat in the fridge, eyeing Will up and down as the agent leaned on the counter. "I'm suggesting you find a professional that doesn't cause your brain to try and kill itself." Hannibal made his way closer, pressing Will between his own body and the counter, fanged smile upturned.

"Why quit? Jealous you're not the one that's got me sweating all night?" Will ran his thumb up and down Hannibal's jugular, watching the adam's apple bob.

"I've never hidden my proneness to possessiveness."

"Well maybe—" Will sighed, feeling the phone begin another vibrating assault. "I really need to take this Hannibal. It could be the Ripper."

Hannibal's eyebrow twitched at that but he remained silent as Will brought the phone to his ear.

“This better be important Jack. It’s like 5 in the morning.”

“A girl has been abducted. I think…” an audible swallow made Jack’s throat click. “I think we’ve got a new serial killer on our hands. One targeting children.”

Will felt his heart fall in his stomach like a stone. His hand involuntarily shot to Hannibal’s forearm, grip turning his knuckles white. All thoughts of sleep were gone. He could already feel shadows swirling beneath his eyes.

“I’ll be there.”

****

Hobbs fluffed the pillow and smoothed the sheets. Not even allowing wrinkles to remain as he tucked the girl in. Carefully, Garrett untucked the hair from her neck to waterfall around her. With eyes closed she looked asleep instead of murdered.

Bile rose to Hobbs’ throat but he swallowed it down. He couldn’t afford to throw up here.

Distant mumbling of Elise’s parents drifted through the door. They were wondering how the bus had misplaced her. What they’d done wrong as parents, what they could have done differently.

Garrett carded his fingers through her hair one last time, even pinching her gray cheek like he would Abigail’s own. Guilt nearly chocked him already, a hard ball of mucus he couldn’t quite swallow.

He was going to miss her.

****

“Where’d the cat go?” Will clawed at his scruffy cheek, trying to ignore the hopeful stares of the girl’s parents.

“…cat?” the girl’s mother croaked.

“You guys… you got pictures of a cat. Where is it?”

“Will…” Jack muttered. He wasn’t sure what social cue he’d stepped on, but apparently it was a landmine.

“The cat has been sick since Elise didn’t come home from school. She won’t come out of hiding.”

Will opened and closed his fists, thinking. Processing.

“I’m sorry, what does the cat have to do with my eight year old daughter missing?” the father spit, ignoring the tight grip of his wife next to him.

Will shrugged, not caring enough to give the man an answer. He continued his walk through of the house.

“What the fuck is his *problem*— “ the man began but was cut off by Jack’s attempt at placating while Will climbed the stairs.

An orange cat, the one in the photos, was laying by a closed door. It’s little paw swiping under the door jam as it let out feeble meows.

“Want in?” Will smiled, opening the door to let the cat in.

Only to watch it jump and curl up next to Elise Nichols’ dead body.

Chapter End Notes

I’m very excited we’re starting on the shrike. Them framing Gideon is where things really start to spiral out of either of the pair’s control. Tehehe

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!